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Guil. Sill, Rev^do Epiſc. Lond. a Sacris Domeſt.

Jan. 24. 1677.

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A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

PERIOD

OF

Humane Life:

Whether

Mutable or *Immutable.*

By the Author of *The Duty of Man laid down in Expreſs Words of Scripture.*

LONDON,
Printed by *H. C.* for *Enoch Wyer,* at the *White Hart* in St. *Pauls* Church-yard, 1677.

To the Honourable *Colledge* of *Physitians* at *London.*

Generous Gentlemen,

THat I *presume to prefix your great Name to so mean a Book, proceeds not from any confidence I have of its value; but from the nature of the Discourse, which your excellent Pro-*

feſſion is ſo much concern-ed in. For I muſt ſay, that ſince I could under-ſtand the Debate, I have thought their opinion, who maintain the Period of every mans Life to be unalterably fixed by an abſolute Decree, does endanger your Profeſſion ſo much, that the truth is, if it be true, you may ſeek out ſome new world for your practice; for here you ſhould be only like the Idol-Gods, who

who could neither do good nor evil.

This the excellent Jo. Beverovicius *did prudently foreſee, and partly endeavoured to ſatisfie both himſelf and others, by asking the advice of the* Learned men *of his age.*

But that the Period of Humane Life *may be both extended and ſhortned, common experience does ſufficiently atteſt. How many have*

been hurried to their Graves by the unskilfulneſs of Empericks; *and are there not multitudes alſo that can witneſs, you have been (under God) the cauſe their Lives have been prolonged.*

Gentlemen, *I know you can expect no Panagyrick from ſuch an unfit perſon as I acknowledg my ſelf to be. And methinks I alſo hear all men ſay, that that is a buſi-*

buſineſs only for a Homer *to perform. If the meanneſs of this Preſent be cenſured by ſome, yet I know you are more generous than to do ſo; eſpecially ſince the beſtowing of a more valuable and ſignal evidence of reſpect, is only impeded by the inability of,*

Honoured Gentlemen,

Your moſt devoted
Servant, *R. E.*

The Preface.

Reader,

THE following Diſcourſe is of ſo ſmall bulk, that a Preface *may ſeem as needleſs and ridiculous as an* Index. *In ſome few hours it may be peruſed, and then both the deſign of the Author and of the Book may be known. It may be thou deſireſt to know, what was the occaſion of the following Diſcourſe. But I know not if I be obliged to anſwer this and ſuch like idle queſtions; yet to ſatisfie thy curioſity, know, that the Author was unhappily engaged to converſe with a ſociety of men, who frequently de-*

debated this and such like queries; and mostly he was opposed by the greater part, as maintaining an unreasonable position. Whether their charge be true or false, is a thing better determined by others unconcerned, than either by them or me. I know very well their clamorous calumnies and reproaches, which since I cannot shun, I shall endeavour to slight, as indeed unworthy to be regarded.

If men of good consideration dislike any thing in the discourse, I promise them, upon Information I shall either endeavour to satisfie them, or to rest satisfied with what they say. Nay further, if there be any Line in it inconsistent with Piety and Religion, freely reject it; for I perswade thee (if the Author knew any such) he would burn the Book for its sake.

But I hope upon trial there shall be

be found no harſh action in it to offend the moſt ſqueamiſh conſcience. For the opinion I have rejected is, in my judgment inconſiſtent with the Divine Goodneſs and Holineſs, repugnant to the freedom of Humane Nature, and deſtructive of all lawful means for the preſervation of a mans life. While as that ſentiment I embrace, begets in mens minds, noble and generous conceptions to promote real Piety and Religion, and to ſhun all manner of wickedneſs and intemperance; upon the account that Piety is the means to prolong our lives, and wickedneſs the cauſe of our ſhort lives. And that this is no cheat or deluſion, the wiſeſt of men has left upon record, Prov. 11. 19. As righteouſneſs tendeth to life ſo he that purſueth evil, purſueth it to his own death. *This brings to my memory the Pſalmiſts advice, with which I ſhall conclude;* What man

man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it. But the wicked and deceitful man shall not live out half his days.

OF

OF THE PERIOD OF Humane Life.

Job xiiij. 5, 6.

Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, that he cannot paſs. Turn from him, that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh as an hireling his days.

THis excellent Book of *Job* repreſents to us a plain and unqueſtionable inſtance of the various ſucceſſes all humane acti-

ons are liable to, and of the promiſcuous adminiſtration of Divine Providence to particular perſons. Here we may read of *Job*'s happy and flouriſhing condition, that *he was the greateſt of all the men of the Eaſt.* And of his low and afflicted ſtate, poor even to a Proverb, and in a condition that only pleaded pity and compaſſion; and how again *the Lord bleſſed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.*

From this various adminiſtration of Providence, men have taken occaſion to make divers inferences. The ſcoffing Atheiſt hath from thence wickedly concluded, that God hath no care of humane affairs. If God (ſay theſe ſcoffers) had any care of this world, he would never ſuffer thoſe men who have corrupted their ways by treachery and deceit, to proſper and enjoy an affluence of all worldly

worldly delights; whereas the vertuous and godly man, who takes heed to his ways, leſt he ſin, and who throughout the whole courſe of his life has carefully ſtudied to *keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and man*, is notwithſtanding *a man of ſorrow, and acquainted with grief*; as *plagued all the day long, and chaſtened every morning, and hath waters of a full Cup wrung out to him.* If God (ſay they) concerned himſelf with humane affairs, he would never ſuffer *the Tabernacles of Robbers to proſper*, and the houſe of the upright to be ruined and deſtroyed.

This is without all contradiction a great ſtumbling-block and offence to the blind Atheiſt; and hath even been a ſad trial to the beſt of Gods people. *Wherefore does the way of the wicked*

proſper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherouſly? was a queſtion *Jeremy* could hardly at firſt reſolve. And we find *Job* and the Prophet *Habbakkuk* very much puzled with it; and the *Pſalmiſt* plainly confeſſeth, that *his feet were almoſt gone*, and that *his ſteps had well nigh ſlipt, when he ſaw the proſperity of the wicked*, Pſal. 73.

To ſee bad men proſpering in their wicked purpoſes and undertakings, and good men unſucceſsful and fruſtrated in their juſt attempts, has been none of the leaſt Topics the *Epicurean* Atheiſts have made uſe of, in their exempting this world from the Divine Rule and Dominion. It was this ſingle conſideration that made *Cato* (who was once a Preacher of Providence; how orthodox, I enquire not) accuſe the Dominion and

and Government of the Gods, of inſtability and unjuſtneſs, that *Cæſar* who tyrannically invaded the Rights of the Commonwealth of *Rome*, ſhould be ſucceſsful in ſo unjuſt attempts; and *Pompey* put to the worſt, and overthrown in the lawful defence of his Country: this ſtumbled him exceedingly. 'Tis true, ſome few of the learned and ſober Heathens did not thus raſhly fall foul upon Providence; but very wiſely inferred the being of a future ſtate, where the vertuous ſhall be rewarded, and the vitious puniſhed. And thoſe holy men in Scripture, who did *fret becauſe of the proſperity of the wicked*, quickly perceived their folly and error, and that the wicked were only fed like ſheep for the ſlaughter; and as the Poet excellently expreſſeth it, *tolluntur in altum ut lapſu graviore ruant.*

Job's Friends, though they did not directly fall foul upon the Divine Providence, yet it is evident they were of opinion, that God would never have afflicted *Job* with ſuch ſad calamities, if he had been upright and ſincere. *Remember* (ſaith *Eliphaz*) *who ever periſhed being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?* ch. 4.7. *Bildad* tells *Job*, *If thou wert pure and upright, ſurely now he would awake for thee*, ch. 8.6. To both theſe *Zophar* ſucceeds, with a charge as grievous and bitter, *For thou haſt ſaid, my Doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes: But O that God would ſpeak, and open his lips againſt thee*, ch. 11. v. 4, 5.

Theſe were the Cordials *Job*'s Friends afforded him, while-as his afflicted condition pleaded pity from his friends. Theſe accuſa-

tions

tions were heavy; but he ſaw it was needleſs to tell them, that God might deſtroy the perfect as well as the wicked; and altho he would not plead *not guilty*, for then he confeſſeth *his own lips ſhould prove him perverſe*; yet he humbly conceived, that it was a dangerous principle to conclude love or hatred from any ſuch outward diſpenſations.

Therefore finding all his intreaties rejected, and his plea's for his own defence ſlighted; he is at length forced to beg their ſilence, deſiring far rather to plead his cauſe with his Maker, who could diſcern his ſincerity; and therefore having ordered his cauſe, *ch.* 13. 18. and taken an exact and accurate examination of his former ways, he begins his pleadings for a mitigation of his preſent calamity, from *v.* 23, which

he continues till interrupted by *Eliphas*, ch. 15. and amongſt the many arguments he urgeth, that taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds prefixed to men is not the ſmalleſt: *Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs. Turn from him that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh as an hireling his day.*

Theſe words being the ground of the following Diſcourſe, it is but reaſonable I ſhould ſpend a little time in their explanation.

Seeing his days are determined, &c. The word which our Tranſlators render *ſeeing*, is in the Original אם *if*, which ſome Expoſitors think is uſed by way of query, thus, *If his days be determined?* But the Context ſeems to warrant our Vulgar Tranſlation;

tion, and there is no doubt, but it is very emphatick; for it contains an implicit affirmation, a phraſe very ordinary, when the thing for its certainty is confeſſed and acknowledged. But let us ſuppoſe, that the words ſhould be rendered by way of query, yet there are two doubts that muſt be removed, elſe their quarrelling with our Tranſlation is vain and impertinent. 1. It ſeems to be very evident, that it has then been a received opinion, that the days of men are determined; elſe *Job* had never made uſe of this argument, in his pleadings for a ceſſation from trouble. 2. If *Job* had indeed doubted, that mans days were *determined*, it was no wiſe nor rational plea, eſpecially ſince he was pleading with God, who knew whether it were ſo or not; and ſince he might have made uſe

of indubitable Topicks. But I paſs by this debate as trivial.

His days, &c. It is debated by ſome, why *Job* makes uſe of the third perſon, and not of the firſt. The reaſon ſome give is this, becauſe the third perſon uſed for the firſt, denotes contempt and modeſty; and therefore *Job* in his low ſtate is pleaſed thus to abaſe himſelf, eſpecially ſince pleading with his Maker. But this conjecture is not fully ſatisfactory, for *Job* in ſeveral of his other pleas, makes uſe of the firſt perſon; which methinks he would not have done, if he had made uſe of the third perſon upon the account of the former conſideration; therefore from the promiſcuous uſurpation of the perſons, we may eaſily conjecture, that when the argument he brings does in a more peculiar manner reach his own

own private condition, then he makes uſe of the firſt perſon: an inſtance of this we have *ch.* 13. 23, 24, *&c.* But now this argument taken from the determined days, and unpaſſable bounds ſet to men, is a general one, which all men as well as he might plead; therefore he ſpeaketh in the third perſon, yet always eying his own condition. The like inſtance we find in the beginning of this Chapter, *Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.* Here he ſpeaks in the third perſon, and not in the firſt; for to be of *few days*, and *full of trouble*, is the character of every man. *Few and evil* (ſays *Jacob* to *Pharaoh*) *have the days of the years of my life been*, Gen. 47. 9.

Are determined, &c. This word in the Original properly ſignifieth to *dig*, or *cut thorow*; here it is

to

to be underſtood metaphorically; becauſe God doth as exactly know the number of mens days, as if the moſt accurate ſearch were made. 'Tis true, in all humane determinations, it is reaſonable that conſultation preceed. Some ſpace muſt intervene betwixt their knowing of a thing and their determinations abont it. I confeſs, it is diſputed, whether the Humane Will be of it ſelf a knowing faculty? or if it muſt follow in its choice the dictates of the intellect? I will not diſpute this now; but there is truth in that general Maxim, *ignoti nulla cupido*. But to fancy that there is any ſuch priority between the Divine knowledg and volition, is a groſs miſtake, irreconcilable with the Infinite and Eternal perfections of God: who *uno actu & ictu*, (as they ſpeak) comprehendeth and willeth all future Events.

The

The number of his Months are with thee, &c. This Phraſe holds out theſe two things: *Firſt*, the Exactneſs and Infiniteneſs of the Divine knowledg; and *Secondly* the Divine rule and dominion. *Firſt*, it holds out the Divine knowledg to be Infinite and Exact, *The number of his months are with thee.* That is, thou art a God whoſe knowledg reacheth the ſmalleſt portion of our time, even to months and days; thou alone knoweſt all thoſe circumſtances; and to know the particular portion of days allowed to every man, does certainly require an infinite and exact knowledg. I will not curiouſly enquire, what truth there is in the pretended diabolical predictions of future Events; and whether Star-gazers from the Conjunctions, and contrary Aſpects of Celeſtial Bodies, can foretell the

the future number of the days and months of terreſtial and inferiour Sublunary beings: a paſſing view of this I will have occaſion to take afterwards; at preſent we reſt ſatisfied with this, that an exact and comprehenſive knowledg of our days and months, is only the prerogative of him who holds our lives in being; the pretended knowledg any Creature boaſteth of, is conjectural and uncertain, if not (as frequently it is) fictitious, unleſs when the Divine wiſdom for ſome ſecret, and to us unknown ends, reveals to his creatures ſuch future Events. But *Secondly*, the Phraſe holds out the Divine Rule and Dominion, *The number of his months are with thee*: that is, they are in thy power, thou may'ſt either prolong or ſhorten the days of Men: and I think the meaning of this whole verſe

verſe is comprehended under theſe two heads, which I ſhall afterwards diſcourſe of at more length.

Thou haſt appointed his bounds, &c. It is not Fate or Fortune, but the wiſe God who appoints to every Man his time; now the bounds ſet to Men may be conſidered under a two fold notion. *Firſt*, As it ſignifies that common and ordinary Period which the God of Nature has ſetled, which Men by the common courſe of Nature may fulfill, if no accidental circumſtance hinder: and it ſeems the Pſalmiſt only underſtands this common term of Humane Life, *Pſal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are Threeſcore years and Ten, and if by reaſon of Strength they be foureſcore*; &c. or *Secondly*, It may be underſtood in a more ſtrict ſenſe, as it is taken for the laſt moment of every individual and

and particular perſon; and of both theſe I ſhall more fully diſcourſe afterwards and ſhow, that the words ſeem to refer to the common term of Humane Life; or if they mean this particular term, in what ſenſe they are to be underſtood *determined, appointed*, &c.

Theſe and ſuch like condeſcending Phraſes, have been moſt unhappily uſed, and ſadly miſunderſtood in the Schools. Some men no ſooner read in Scripture of Gods determining or appointing, but they inſtantly conclude a phyſical previous neceſſitating act, which inevitably and irreſiſtibly determines Men: and this kind of determination they plead for in all caſes: ſo that Men even in their vitious actions are irreſiſtibly determined to do ſo. I know no opinion which has rendered the reformed Church more odious than this:

this: would to God I could ſay the Cenſure is cauſeleſs, and that I were forced to apologize, for ſaying our Divines have erred in this caſe. But alas the opinion is grown ſtrong, and not long ſince it was not much leſs than Hereſie to condemn it: and even to this day it is the ſtudy of ſome Teachers, to inſtill it into the hearts of their Hearers. For the correcting of this ſowre opinion, I ſhall have occaſion to add ſome things in this following diſcourſe; now I ſhall deſire it to be conſidered, that while we ſpeak of the Divine determinations, appointment, &c. we ſpeak of things our knowledg cannot reach, the beſt conceptions we can frame to our ſelves of the Divine volitions, are dangerous and imperfect; our capacities in this lapſed ſtate are more narrow than we are

aware

aware of: and altho they were raiſed to a higher pitch, yet we can never comprehend his way of working, who in all his ways is unſearchable. 'Tis truly ſad to ſee the contending World ſo ſerious and reſtleſs in digging thoſe deeps that are unfathomable; it were to be wiſhed that Men did not found their pretended knowledg of the Divine volitions, on the baſis of their own ſilly volitions and did not argue from what we find in our ſelves to be the ſame in God. 'Tis true the holy Spirit hath condeſcended to expreſs things ſuitable to our Underſtanding & mean capacities, therefore we read in Scripture of the Divine determinations, appointments, &c. but yet to abuſe ſuch condeſcending expreſſions, and to imagine that there were really ſuch purpoſes, and volitions in God as theſe

we

we perceive in our ſelves: this were a hainous crime, pray let us ſatisfy our ſelves with this, that God in an eminent and tranſcending manner doth theſe things, which we cannot do without willing, decreeing, &c.

That he cannot paſs, or as others render it, *and he ſhall not paſs*; which Phraſe is not to be underſtood, as if the particular Period of every Mans life were ſo fatally fixed that he can neither ſhorten nor prolong it, for this is contrary to many clear Texts of Scripture, as ſhall afterwards fully appear: but by this Phraſe, we are to underſtand the common term of Humane Life, which is not mutable as the particular term is, and yet is not ſo fixed, that it cannot be altered; for God has ſtill reſerved in his own power the ſhortening and

prolonging of it. And further we muſt not apprehend that the particular term of Humane Beings is ſo mutable, that God knows them not, and cannot foretel the preciſe Period of every mans life, or that the Divine Counſel concerning things Future is mutable; no ſure, God has declared the contrary, *I am God, and there is none like mee*, (ſaith the Almighty) *declaring the End from the Beginning, and from ancient time the things that are not yet done; ſaying, myCouſenl muſt ſtand, and I will do all my pleaſure*, *Iſa.* 46. 9. Two things there be which occaſion men to change their purpoſes and reſolutions. 1. Their want of Power to execute them. 2. their finite and ſhallow Knowledg, which cannot foreſee thoſe future circumſtances which render their Deſigns ineffectual. But now

now there is no difficulty that can poſe the Almighty; *with him all things are poſſible*, it is the Prophets argument, *the Lord of Hoſts hath purpoſed, who ſhall diſanull it? his hand is ſtretched out, and who ſhall turn it back? Iſa.* 24. 17. And further there is no circumſtance or condition that lyes in the dark, and unſeen to him, whoſe knowledg is infinite, and who equally comprehends things paſt, preſent and to come. Therefore is it that men cannot paſs theſe bounds prefixed by the Divine foreknowledg: But of this afterwards.

Turn from him, &c. it is queryed whether *Job* here petitioneth a withdrawing of Gods ſupporting preſence, and a ceſſation by death, or a ceſſation from the affliction and trouble he lay under. There be three things that plead for the former Interpreta-

tion. 1. Becauſe the word חדל placed abſolutely, ſignifieth to ceaſe by death, 1. *Sam.* 2. 5. *and they that were hungry ceaſed, i. e.* died. 2. Becauſe the ſupporting hand of Providence being removed, men return to the Duſt. *Thou hideſt thy face they are troubled, thou takeſt away their Breath, they dye, and return to their duſt, Pſal.* 104. 29. 3. It is not inconſiſtent with *Jobs* former deſires, *Chap.* 3. and 6. *Why died I not from the Womb? why did I not give up the Ghoſt when I came out of the belly? for now ſhould I have lien* [*ſtill*] *and been* [*quiet*;] *I ſhould have* [*ſleept,*] *then had I been at* [*reſt*]: *O that I might have my requeſt, even that it would pleaſe God to deſtroy me!*

That the phraſe can never admit the former gloſs evidently appears from the words immediately

ately following, for if *Job* had been pleading for death, why is that reaſon added, *that he might accompliſh his day*? It is only then a ceſſation from his grievous affliction that he ſo earneſtly intreateth; as if he had ſaid, Lord, thy afflicting hand is heavie, and what am I but weak duſt, not able to bear thy heavy Chaſtiſments? my Soul is overburdened with grief, and wilt thou ſet thy terrors before me to affright me? hath not poor man in this lapſed ſtate, Troops of miſeries attending him, from which he may expect no freedom till Mortality be ſwallowed up in Life? and are not his few days labour and ſorrow, pain and affliction? and wilt thou to thoſe inſeparable evils, ſuperadd a burthen of pain more grievous and inſufferable? O do not meaſure out ſo diſmal a Condition to

thy ſilly Creature! make me not the object of thy direful vengeance, but in the midſt of wrath remember mercy. Art thou not Goodneſs it ſelf, and far more compaſſionate than the moſt tender parent? and ſhall it be ſaid thou haſt meaſured out ſo acute torments to vex thy poor Creatures? I confeſs Perfection is not the thing I plead; yet may not I ſay, it is not for my iniquity, nor for my ſin, that thou haſt afflicted me? and let this Conſideration alſo prevail with thee, that my untender friends ſadly miſtake thy deſign in afflicting me; they conclude it is for ſome ſecret heinous crime, that thy judgments are upon me: O that thou wouldſt turn from thy wrath, that I may enjoy ſome reſt, before I go whence I ſhall not return?

This phraſe *turn from him*, is ſome-

ſometimes taken in a very bad ſenſe. Thus we find the wicked ſadly characterized, as a people who deſire God to depart from them; but as it is uttered by the people of God under the preſſure of afflictions, it implies no more but a ſerious deſire that God would be pleaſed to remove that burden. Now in ſuch innocent petitions there appeareth no crime, for it is certain, that afflictions *ſimply* conſidered, are grievous even to the beſt of Mankind: *there is no affliction* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *for the preſent that is joyous but grievous.* 'Tis true impatience under affliction is an exceſs which no excuſe whatſoever can pardon: there are ſome perſons of ſuch haſty complexions, that they riſe in paſſion againſt God if they meet with the leaſt affliction; juſt like that wretched

man who ſaid, *this evil is of the Lord why ſhould we wait any longer upon him?* But thoſe petitions of the Faithful in holy writ, altho at the firſt view they ſeem to be peremptory and abſolute, yet they are truly qualified and ſubmiſſive; and at the moſt, only expreſs the harmleſs reſentments of innocent nature, that cannot but expreſs how contrary afflictions are to it.

That he may reſt; ut quieſcat ſc. paululum, that his affliction being removed he may yet enjoy a little ſpace to ſolace himſelf, till he accompliſh his day. I will purpoſely decline the anſwer of that querie, Whether it is lawful to wiſh death when our condition is charged with a ſurpluſage of calamity; for the brevity I deſign will not ſuffer me to ſurvey the difficulties of that caſe, only in the

the general I ſhall add two things. 1. If the affliction be violent, fierce, and ſeemingly durable, rendering us uncapable of exerciſing any duty; I queſtion not but common reaſon will ſuggeſt to every ſober man, that in that caſe Death is more eligible than Life. Yet 2. ſince we are ignorant what God deſigns to us, by ſending us ſuch afflicti-ons, it is our part to ſubmit to the Lords will, and ſay, *Good is the will of the Lord.* Thus altho we may comparatively and ſubmiſſively wiſh Death upon the account of ſome acute trials, yet it is never lawful to be peremptory and abſolute in ſuch deſires; for frequently the happy event makes men conclude that *it was good for them they were afflicted.*

Reſt, &c. Methinks the very ſound of this word is full of raviſhing ſweetneſs and pleaſure, and yet

yet to thoſe who are ſtated in a condition of Woe and Miſery, it is bitter and harſh; as the moſt raviſhing and pleaſant Muſick is in the Ear of him who is ſad: thoſe who never taſted the honey-comb, know not its ſweetneſs: the men who have been always drudges and ſlaves, have no diſcerning what Liberty is; and thoſe who from their birth have been accuſtomed to pain, know not their miſery ſo ſenſibly. But to have once enjoyed bleſſings, and on a ſudden to be deprived of them, not only the unexpected change, but alſo their former happineſs, adds to their miſery, and makes their condition more unſufferable. If man had been created to toil and labour, *his eating of bread in the ſweat of his face*, had been no curſe: but to have been placed in a bleſſed and happy ſtate, and

by

by his folly to be hurled into a ſtate of miſery and pain, that compleats his calamity, and makes him ſenſible, how miſerable a thing it is to have been happy.

This ſingle conſideration ſeems to add very much to *Jobs* miſery, his condition was once more than ordinary happy; and the amiſſion of the comforts he formerly enjoyed, makes him pathetically cry out, *O that I were as in months paſt, as in the days when God preſerved me; but now* (as he ſadly complains) *they that are younger than I, have me in deriſion.*

If *Job* in this ſtate of woe had been perſwaded of the certain change of his condition, *and that his latter end ſhould be more bleſſed than his beginning*, the expected hopes of this had ſerved to allay and mitigate his ſorrow, and

to

to render his caſe more ſufferable and eaſie. It is the hops of reſt, that puts ſtrength in the wearied traveller; it was the expected reward and aſſurance of a future bleſſedneſs and better reſurrection, which made thoſe Worthies *Heb.* 11. ſo cheerfully undergo ſuffering. What the happineſs of the Saints reſt is, I am not able to repreſent, it being ſo far above any thing we can in this imperfect ſtate conceive or imagine. The advantages that attend our preſent tranquillity and reſt, are many and great, which to enumerate would be prolix and tedious: but if from that, we ſhould frame to our ſelves an *Idea* of that Celeſtial Reſt, how imperfect would it be? any Reſt we enjoy here, is uncertain: an unthought-of cauſality may impair it, but the Reſt that remains for the people of God

God is everlaſting, there is no fear of loſing it: Heaven is a place free from trouble, and there is nothing that can imbitter that pleaſant ſtate.

Philoſophers have a ſaying, *that the end of Motion is Reſt*; this is indeed true of all thoſe motions and trials the ſervants of God meet with; the way to the Kingdom is ſpread over with thiſtles; *thorow many tribulations we muſt enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: but thoſe Waves of affliction will quickly over; and when the day breaks, theſe ſhadows will flee away. This Winter will ſoon be paſt, and *the ſinging of the Birds will come*; and Chriſtians, who by faith and patience continue in well-doing, ſhall ere be long be placed in thoſe manſions of Reſt, that are in *Emanuels* land.

Alas,

Alas, how inſenſible do we remain under the enjoyment of our outward comforts! when we are bleſſed with food, liberty and health, we are but ſenſibly ſtupid and ignorant, what is the value of thoſe mercies: but if hunger and want begin to pinch us, if our former liberty be hedged in, if ſickneſs and pain ſeize upon us, then we begin to gather ſome ſenſe, and we accuſe our ſelves for our ingratitude to God.

Till he ſhall accompliſh as an Hireling his day: for the better underſtanding of this ſimilitude, I ſhall in four particulars compare the days of man with the days of an Hierling, and in each of them make application to *Jobs* caſe. 1. The days of an Hierling, denotes a time, ſet, prefixed and limited for the performance of ſome particular piece of ſervice; and

and are not the days of man alſo allotted him for to do his maſters buſineſs? We were not born to be idle and negligent, ſure God had ſome greater deſign in the Creation of man than this: now this particular quadrates very well with *Jobs* caſe, and ſeems to make the meaning of *Jobs* words to run thus; Lord, thou haſt given me a being, and appointed me a work to accompliſh: but alas while I am thus excruciated with horror and pain, I am unfitted for thy ſervice, the ſurpluſage of miſery meaſured out to me, diſinables me to go about thy work, be entreated therefore O merciſull father to turn from thy diſpleaſure, remove the preſent heavy calamity I am overburdened with; that I may yet accompliſh the remainder of my time in thy work and ſervice. 2. This ſet and fixed

day

day of the Hireling is full of pain, labour and toil; he is (poor wretch) both late and early at work, and ſeldom has he any interwals of reſt, unleſs his maſter be more than ordinary gentle and benign; and when he is thus indulged a little eaſe, he muſt not with the ſluggard ſay, *O ſi hoc eſſet Laborare*, he muſt to his work again, for upon this depends his payment; no wages is the reſult of not working; and in ſome caſes ſtripes and whipping is the fruit of negligence. And what is mans life? at the beſt ſtate it is but ſorrow and trouble, till mortality be ſwallowed up in life. Our pleaſures (upon which we put the higheſt value) are either purchaſed, or accompanied with pain and labour. If we be in a proſperous ſtate, our minds are either diſtracted with care to make it more

more proſperous; or with fears puzled and perplexed, leſt it be overcleuded, and if we be in a low and adverſe ſtate, we grieve and repine; nay knowledg, the moſt excellent of earthly pleaſures, is yet in the judgment of the wiſeſt of men, but vexation of ſpirit; *for in much Wiſdom there is much grief, and he that encreaſeth Knowledg encreaſeth Sorrow.* The life of man is not unfitly compared to *Ezekiels* Roll, which was full of woes. If one miſery or woe paſſeth, behold another cometh, as one wave ſucceeds another. And by all theſe calamities we may learn what an evil Sin is, the fruit of which are all thoſe calamities we meet with; *in the ſweat of thy face ſhalt thou eat thy bread till thou return unto the ground.* And upon this account *Job* may be ſuppoſed to plead with God thus; Lord, is not my

time at beſt but lamentable and miſerable? and wilt thou ſuperadd to this inevitable miſery, a ſurpluſage of pain and affliction? O deal kindly with thy ſervant who is devoted to thy fear, *turn from me that I may reſt till I ſhall accompliſh as an Hireling my day. Thirdly*, True it is that the Hirelings day is but Labour and Pain; yet the brevity and ſhortneſs thereof makes him regard it the leſs. It is but a day, and that will quickly be over and gone; and what is the life of man? it is but as a hand-bredth of a ſmall extenſion; or like to a paſſing ſhadow, which we ſcarce ſooner perceive than it vaniſheth. *Man that is born of a Woman is of few days, he cometh forth like a Flower and is cut down*: his decaying is within ſome few minuts of his budding; as the Poet ſpeaketh of Roſes, *& dum naſcuntur conſenuiſſe Roſas.*

Roſas. Now from this reaſon *Job* may be ſuppoſed to argue thus; Lord, thou knoweſt how frail and brittle I am, and if thou contend thus with me, how quickly ſhall I return to the duſt. I beſeech thee conſider that my time is however but ſhort, and let thy Goodneſs appear in removing thy ſtroke away from me, for I am conſumed by the blow of thine hand; *O ſpare me that I may recover ſtrength, before I go hence and be no more.* *Fourthly*, Thereſt and wages the Hireling expecteth, makes the accompliſhing of his day more eaſie and tolerable. The word rendred accompliſh, ſignifieth to will and delight in a thing earneſtly; *donec optata veniat dies.* 'Tis a day wiſhed and longed for, and much delighted in when it comes. And indeed the ſtrength of the compariſon ſeems to ly in this, which makes the mean-

ing of *Jobs* words to be this; Lord, now my trouble and pain excruciats and torments me, and my life is more wearisome to me than the Hirelings day can be to him; therefore turn away thy wrath from me, that in the finishing of my course I may be as jovial and cheerful, as the Hiereling is when his day is accomplished: and thus I have done with the Explanation of these words.

The next thing I designed in this undertaking, is to enquire how the days of every mans life may be said to be determined; and whether the Period of every mans life were so fixed and bounded, that by his care, good managery, and use of the means, it cannot be extended; nor shortned by his negligence, intemperance, or exposing of himself to Famine, Sword, or Plague, it is very certain from this plain text of Scrip-

Scripture, that the days of every mans life are determined; but the manner how, is left unexplained: and this we do not learn from Scripture. And it were to be wished that our curiosity would forbear any enquiry into things that are hid: but alas our inclinations are so wicked and perverse, that *nitimur in vetitum*, we are always bent and eager in our enquiries after things of a mysterious alloy; and God knows how miserably some men have mistaken in their enquiries after a solution of the present doubt: and if I could promise to my self to rectify those huge mistakes some men have fallen into, this would be a sufficient justification of my present undertaking.

But in order to the unfolding of this doubt, I shall premise four things which will contribute to the better understanding of it.

Firſt, There is no doubt that every mans life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*; this is a warfare from which there is no diſcharge: *what man is he that liveth and ſhall not ſee death*? as to this, the Prince and Peaſant ſtand upon even terms, and as the wiſe-man tells us, the rich & poor meet together: there is no juſtling in the Grave for precedency. I confeſs it were not worth the pains to conſider the trivial inſtances, taken from the tranſlation of *Enoch* and *Elias*, to infringe this poſition. For firſt, we are not to debate what God may do, he has a Soveraignty over his Creatures, and muſt not be called to give a reaſon of his actions; all whoſe ways are tracts of wiſdom and goodneſs. *Secondly*, We know nothing of the manner of their tranſlation: he who will poſitively ſay, that they did not under-

undergo that which is equivalent to death, will ſay more than he can prove. I am apt to believe that no ſober man will ſay, that they entred their Heavenly habitation with their unrefined bodies; no more than thoſe who riſe at the ſound of the laſt Trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye, are carried into Heaven without any change.

Secondly, It is alſo unqueſtionable, that Sin introduced this Period to every mans life; the primitive threatning runs thus, *in the day thou eats thou ſhalt dye*. And the Apoſtle hath as plainly expreſt it as it can be, *wherefore as by one man ſin entred into the World, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſſed upon all men for that all have ſinned*, *Rom.* 5. 12. where it is plain, that Death is a puniſhment inflicted for Sin, ſo that if man had never ſinned, we have no reaſon to think he ſhould have

died. I confeſs without Revelation, we could never have gueſſed this to be the cauſe of Death. The Heathen Philoſophers were exceedingly confuſed in their notions concerning the origine of Sin, and the cauſe of Death: many of them thought that Death was a natural accident, originally appurtenant to Humane Nature. And indeed if Revelation had not declared the contrary, I had been fully ſatisfied, that Death had been no other thing but ſuch a natural accident; but it is ſtrange that any man that has converſed with ſacred writ, ſhould be of this opinion. And yet we find, the *Pelagians* of old were great ſticklers for it: hence is it that the ancient Fathers and Councils have condemned it with a Curſe. In the *Milevitan* Council *Can.* 2. we read thus *Placuit, ut quicunque dicit*, Adam *primum hominem mortalem*

talem factum, ita ut ſive peccaret, ſive non peccaret, moreretur in corpore, hoc eſt, de corpore exiret, non peccati merito ſed neceſſitate naturæ, anathema ſit. In after-ages the *Scotiſts* (the moſt ſubtil of all Scholaſtick writers) inclined much to this opinion, againſt whom the *Thomiſts* (their irreconcilable Enemies) took up the cudgels: amongſt modern writers the ſeemingly rational *Socinians*, have owned this groundleſs conceit. But I cannot ſtay to debate this at length, only in brief, if Death had been natural to man in the ſtate of Innocency, it behoved to have been becauſe of theſe following reaſons.

1. Becauſe *Adams* natural conſtitution implied mortality; the Materials of his conſtitution were not ſo amicable as to entertain a laſting amity and friendſhip. 2. It was the primitive precept, *be fruitfull and multiply*; now it is plain

plain that procreation includes mortality in its notion; and farther it ſeems to be unconceivable how this little Map of Earth ſhould have contained a numerous multiplying and never-dying offſpring. 3. Humane Nature in the ſtate of Innocency did ſtand in need of Meat and Drink, as is plain from *Gen.* 1. 19. now the end of eating and drinking is not only to hold up, but to repair the decays of our Bodies, which would ſudenly return to duſt, if they were not this renewed & ſtrengthened. 4. If Death were only the effect of Sin, and the Devil were called a Murderer from the beginning, becauſe of his tempting our firſt parents to eat of the forbidden Fruit, it will follow, that ſince Chriſt came to take away the ſins of the World, and to deſtroy the works of the Devil, that he alſo took away the wages of ſin, which is Death; than which

which nothing is more contrary to daily experience. 5. Immortality ſeems to be entailed only to the ſtate of future Glory, *where Corruption ſhall put on Incorruption, and Mortality ſhall be ſwallowed up in life:* and then *there ſhall be no more death, Rev.* 21. 4. Theſe are the moſt material reaſons I can find for the proof of this opinion, in anſwer to which I ſhall deſire the Five following conſiderations may be weighed.

Conſid. 1. It is not to be doubted that the Eternal wiſdom, furniſhed our firſt parents with all theſe accompliſhments their ſpecifick nature could ſuffer: the ſignatures of Wiſdom and Goodneſs were legible in the loweſt & leaſt regarded piece of the creation; but in Man in a more eminent manner conſpicuous. It is almoſt impoſſible for us in this fallen ſtate, to conceive what thoſe endowments were

were,with which his innocent condition was bleſſed; we have no reaſon to think that there was any jar or diſagreement amongſt his faculties,or oppoſition and fight of one quality with another. It was mans diſobedience that diſturbed the whole univerſe, and diſordered every part of it; while he was at peace with his Maker, he enjoyed a ſerene condition, and needed not fear any hurt either External or Internal: then all the parts of his Body entertained a ſweet harmony, and there could be nothing except Sin that ſhould have made any failure in his conſtitution, or made a ſeparation between his Soul and Body. But Sin having entred the World, every part of the univerſe changed its face, and Man who was Heavens favourit in his firſt mould, is now condemned *to eat his bread in the ſweat of his face till he return unto the duſt.*

This

This is all that we can learn from Revelation concerning the introduction of Death; to ſuppoſe any other account of it, were to give up our ſelves to the dictates of our extravagant fancies: and farther, it is very unreaſonable to infer mans mortality from his conſtitution, and becauſe he is earthly; unleſs we think it alſo rational, that perfected Bodies in the ſtate of Glory are not Bodies, or that they are even there mortal; both which ſeem to be plainly oppoſit to Scripture.

Conſid. 2. The Phraſe Immortal, may fall under a double notion: for *Firſt*, ſometimes it is taken abſolutely, implying a being moſt perfect, which had no beginning, and can have no end; and in this ſenſe, Immortality is ſolely the prerogative of our Maker, and can never be attributed to any creature. *Secondly*, Sometimes it is

is taken Conditionally: and ſo under various conſiderations it may be attributed either, *Firſt*, To perfected Saints who are ſtated in Glory, where the primitive Image loſt by mans fall, is renewed and perfected; and of thoſe our Saviour in the Goſpel of *Luke* tells us, *that they can dye no more*, *Luke* 20. 36. or *Secondly*, to our firſt parents in the State of Innocency. For ſo long as they remained obedient to the Laws of Heaven, Immortality was entailed upon their nature: for the tenor of the primitive threatning is, *in the day thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt dye*: where temporal Death ſeems to be threatned, which had been idle and vain if men had died altho they had never eaten the forbidden Fruit. I know ſome men think that Sin only laid a neceſſary obligation upon men to dye; and provoked God to remove that Super-

pernatural and Superadded quality and gift, which preſerved them from Death. With ſuch ſort of men I have no great quarrel, altho I think that God could as eaſily have made mans conſtitution ſo laſting, and the conſtituent parts of his fabrick ſo harmonious, that he ſhould have never dyed if he had not ſinned, as to create a ſuperadded being to preſerve him ſafe. For reaſon would plead, that that ſuperadded gift required another, and ſo *in infinitum.*

But farther, 'tis very unreaſonable to infer mans corruption from that precept, *be fruitful and multiply*; for altho in ſome ſenſe *generatio unius eſt alterius corruptio*, yet the ſtate of being, even ſince the fall, (to which that axiom has only reſpect) is not ſo brittle, as that the production of the Child infers the deſtruction of the Parent. Neither

Neither doth that curious query concerning the place for that ſuppoſed numerous off-ſpring, carry with it more reaſon; for *Firſt*, It is not to be doubted, but the Wiſe Creator who gave being to man, knew well enough how to provide an habitation for his off-ſpring. *Secondly*, the precept *be Fruitfull and Multiply*, carries with it a limitation, *and repleniſh the Earth*; ſo that we can never well conclude from it, that Generation ſhould have continued after the repleniſhing of the Earth. But. *Thirdly*, What ſuppoſe this little Map of Earth had not been able to contain ſo numerous an off-ſpring could not God have tranſlated man after he had lived ſome ſpace upon the Earth to ſome better habitation, as he did with *Enoch* and *Elijah*?

Conſid. 3. Though man in the ſtate of Innocency ſtood in need of

of Meat and Drink, yet his nutriment was not noxious and hurtfull to him, as now it is. It was for mans diſobedience that a Curſe was upon the ground, before which there was no fear of hurt from the Fruit of the Trees, and the Herbs of the Field: (which were the only things granted to men for food in that ſtate.) And indeed if we but conſider that even in this fallen ſtate, there is a huge difference between the lives of thoſe who live upon wholſome food, and obſerve a moderate diet; and of thoſe who are careleſs in their diet, and feed upon huſks; we cannot but think the former conſideration reaſonable, eſpecially ſince that bleſſed ſtate excluded all manner of exceſs.

Conſid. 4. Great and Manifold are the bleſſed benefits that are conferred upon Mankind, upon

the account of his Redeemer: now Man, who was at odds with his Maker upon the account of his Rebellion, is again taken into favour; and the diſobedient World is reconciled unto God. And altho the being of ſin is not quite aboliſhed, yet the Curſe is removed; and Death is not properly now a puniſhment.

Conſid. 5. Immortality conjoyned with a ſtate of perfect felicity, is reſerved for Heavens favourites: in the ſtate of Innocency our firſt parents were liable to Death if they rebelled, but the Saints above are confirmed in their bleſſed ſtate: and as our Lord Chriſt tells us, *they can dye no more.* But this much may ſuffice for the removing the former doubts.

The *Third* thing I premiſe is, that 'tis very uſual in Scripture, as it is in all Languages, to put the Whole ſometimes for the Part: thus

thus Man is ſaid to dye, to ceaſe, to be mortal, becauſe the Body is liable to Corruption, and not that the whole Man, or all the Eſſential conſtituent parts ceaſe. And thus when we diſpute concerning the Period of every Mans life, we muſt not fooliſhly fancy that a Period is put to the being of the Soul, but only that its union with the body is diſſolved: otherwiſe a diſmal ſtroke would be given to our Religion, and what would become of the vertuous? I confeſs it is very hard and difficult to demonſtrate the immortality of our Souls by natural reaſon: 'tis true, by reaſon I may prove that our Natures are ſpiritual, and that we elicite acts which are beyond the power of matter; but yet we could never be fully aſcertained that there is a Life after this; if Revelation had not plainly diſcove-

covered it. The Heathen Philoſophers very wiſely entertained ſome hopes of a life after this; upon moral arguments taken from the goodneſs of God, and his juſtice in diſtributing Rewards and Puniſhments: but alas how doubtfull were their hopes, and with how much heſitation did they diſcourſe of it! But by the help of Revelation, theſe doubts are fully removed, and we now know that there is a Reſurrection from the dead, and that the Souls of Believers at death go immediatly into glory.

Fourthly, Becauſe the explication of terms is very neceſſary for the unfolding of doubts; I ſhall conſider the twofold notion and acception, the Period of Humane Life is lyable to. 1. Sometimes it is taken in a large ſenſe, for that common and ordinary Period which the Author of our natures

tures hath ſettled, which Men by the common courſe of nature arrive at: now many learned men upon good grounds think that this is the determined bounds mentioned in Scripture. 2. Sometimes it is taken for the laſt moment of every mans life at whatever time it happeneth; whether 1. in the beginning of mans days; or 2. in the midſt of his days; thus the Pſalmiſt prays, that *God would not cut him off in the midſt of his days.* or 3. When men come to be of a good old age and full of years, as it is ſaid of *Abraham, he died in a good old age, an old man and full of years*, Gen. 25. 8.

That there is ſuch a common Period of Humane life ſeems to be certain and indubitable: we evidently enough perceive that men in the age and place wherein we live, exceed not (unleſs rarely)

the bounds fixed upon *Pſal.* 90. 10. *The days of our years are threeſcore years and ten, and if by reaſon of more ſtrength they be fourſcore years, &c.* and if we ſhall deſcend to the conſideration of other Animals and Vegetables, we will find it true enough that the individuals of every ſpecifick nature, have a common Period which doth not ſenſibly alter; but where there is a manifeſt difference of the climate, temperature, and ſoil. Again it is very unqueſtionable that this common Period hath not been equally extended in all ages and places. 'Tis true for many hundred years by-paſt it hath ſuffered very little alteration, but ſure from the beginning it was not ſo, nor can we upon any good ground be aſcertained that it will continue the ſame that it is now, till the end of all fleſh come. Tho I will not poſitive affirm

affirm that mens lives will be insenſibly ſhortened, till they become uncapable for procreation.

But to determine what hath been the common Period of Humane Life in by paſt-ages of the World, is a *Theme* very difficult and hard: for 1. Altho from *Abrahams* time till this preſent age it hath altered but little or nothing, as we may collect from *Gen.* 15. 13, and 16. where a generation is equalled to an Hundred years (as the verſes collated make it evident); yet before the Flood and in ſome few ages following it, this common Term was not concluded within the ſhort bounds it is now; although then it was indeed exceedingly mutable. Before the fatal Flood we read not of any who lived not above ſeven hundred years, (unleſs *Abel* who was murdered, and *Enoch* whom God took to himſelf): nor of any who ex-

ceeded nine Hundred ſixty and nine years. Now the common Period not being ſo denominated from ſome few particular inſtances, but from what happens to the moſt of Mankind in every age who dye a natural death, we may ſuppoſe that Eight Hundred years was the common Period before the Flood. But then after the Flood, the mutability of this common Period is conſpicuous; for in the next age after the Flood, it was cut ſhort two hundred years; and in the next three ſucceeding generations it was abridged to four hundred years; and in the three ſucceeding ages to the former it was reduced to two hundred years; and in *Abrahams* time it ſeems not to have been extended to an hundred years.

In reducing the Life of Mankind into ſhorter bounds now than it was in the infancy of the World, the

the Divine wiſdom and goodneſs do very plainly appear: for 1. Altho it is true that Sin was the cauſe of Miſery, yet it is manifeſt that as Men began to multiply, ſo they became more corrupted; and as the Earth was repleniſhed with Men, ſo with multiplyed Miſeries; and thoſe not only particular but common. War and bloodſhed, ſlavery and toil, pains and deſeaſes, were in the firſt ages of the World very rare and ſingular; now theſe are ordinary and common: and is it not then a great mercy that the days of our life are few, ſince ſo full of evils? But 2. If Men lived as long now as in the firſt ages of the World, a Land would not be able to contain its inhabitants: and this is a far greater inconvenience and diſadvantage, than the ſhortening the leaſe of our beings can be ſuppoſed to be. In the firſt ages of the World, the lives of

Men

Men were extended, that the earth might be repleniſhed; and it is very plain, that this common Period was ſhortened according as Man miultplyed. I confeſs God threatens to deſtroy the inhabitants of a Land for their tranſgreſſions; it was becauſe Men had corrupted themſelves, that God brought a Flood of waters upon the World: and yet the Divine Juſtice was accompanied with aſtoniſhing goodneſs; for he did not (as juſtly he might have) inſtantly cut off that perverſe generation, but he gave them the ſpace of an Hundred and Twenty years to repent. *Tet* (ſaith God) *his days ſhall be an Hundred and Twenty years*, *Gen.* 6. 3. That is, altough this be a perverſe and corrupt geueration, yet becauſe Man is but fleſh, I will give him this time to repent of his wickedneſs; and if notwithſtanding he will

will not after ſuch warning mend his manners, I will deſtroy him. I know many learned Men think that God here only threatens to ſhorten the common Period of Mens lives, and that it ſhould be contracted within the bounds of an Hundred and twenty years: but this expoſition is not agreeable to the experiences of ſome ages next following the Flood, in which Men lived much longer than an Hundred and Twenty years.

But they ſay, God uſes not to anticipate his time in bringing judgments upon a nation or people: to which I anſwer, it is very true; but methinks men have no ground to think, that in the preſent caſe God anticipates the time in bringing judgments upon them; for we cannot think that *Noah* was compleat five Hundred years old, when God threatned to deſtroy the World. And indeed any Man who

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is but a little acquainted with the Jewiſh cuſtom of reckoning of years, knows how uſual it is with them, to name the greater part of any thing for the whole. *St. Auſtin* is ſo clear in this, I'le rather ſet it down in his words than my own: *Intelligendum eſt hoc Deum dixiſſe, cum circa finem quingentorum annorum eſſet* Noah. i. e. *quadragintos octoginta vitæ annos ageret, quos more ſuo Scriptura quingentos vocat; nomine totius maximam partem plerumq; ſignificans.* Aug. de Civ. Dei, lib. 15. c. 24.

Thus much I have ſpoken of the common Period of Humane Life, in reſpect of the ages of the World. I ſhall now add a little concerning its changeableneſs, in reſpect of places: and I confeſs in this caſe it is ſo variable, that it is a hard matter to pitch upon particulars; only in the general

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It is certain, that this common Period is not the ſame in all places: in a temperat climate this common term is extended; but where there is an exceſs of heat, or an unconſtancy of the weather, in thoſe places this common Period is ſhortned.

But paſſing this I come now to conſider the particular Period of every mans life: there be two ways it is commonly taken. 1. As it implies the diſunion of the parts, by reaſon of the exceſs of ſome one quality or other: or 2. as it implies the Period of Humane Life whatever way it is occaſioned, without any relation either to the defect, or exceſs of any quality: and thus the learned *Epiſcopius* ſtates the caſe in his firſt Epiſtle to *Jo. Beverovicius.* But to make this yet more plain, I ſhall conſider that text, 1. *Sam.* 26. 10. *As the Lord liveth the Lord*

Lord ſhall ſmite him, or his day ſhall come to dye, or he ſhall deſcend into battel and periſh. Tho *David* was anointed King, yet he durſt not ſtretch forth his hand againſt the Lords anointed; neither would he permit *Abiſhai*, (who inconſiderately offered) to do it; knowing, none could do ſo and be guiltleſs. Therefore he comforts and ſolaces himſelf with this conſideration, that God ſhould rid him of *Saul* one of theſe three ways: 1. By *ſmiteing him* with ſome diſeaſe; and now to what a numberleſs number of diſeaſes are our frail natures incident? variety of maladies prey upon frail man, and millions of miſeries attend him; *the Peſtilence walketh at noon-day*, and the Air which he breaths may blow out the ſpark of his life. 2. *Or his day will come*; that is, or he will dye a natural Death: now *Saul* was well-ſtricken in years, and

and he knew that by the courſe of nature he could not live long. 3, *Or he ſhall deſcend into battel and periſh* : That is, if ſome diſeaſe cut him not off, or if his day come not, yet he ſhall be expoſed to a violent Death, *or he ſhall deſcend into battel.* Sometimes a violent Death is purely caſual; thus it was with *thoſe eighteen upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell, Luke* 13. 4. Sometimes it is only improperly caſual, as when one of two equally expoſed to danger is only killed: and ſometimes it is only and properly violent, ſuch was *Sauls* death, ſuch was *Achitophels* and *Hamans.*

The way to this diſcourſe in hand being thus far cleared, I ſhall now proſecute the deſign of it in this method. 1. I ſhall ſet down thoſe erroneous opinions into which ſome men have unhappily fallen in their enquiry for ſatisfaction

faction in the preſent caſe. 2. I ſhall lay down the two common opinions that offer faireſt for ſolving this doubt. 3. I ſhall attempt a full and ſatisfactory anſwer: and laſtly I ſhall conclude with ſome reflections upon the whole diſcourſe.

I begin with the firſt to give an account of thoſe erroneous ſentiments ſome men have unhappily embraced in their inquiry for ſatisfaction in this matter. And that I may ſhun tediouſneſs, I ſhall reduce them to the two following heads. 1. Some have fooliſhly imagined that the Period of Humane Life is fatal and neceſſary. 2. Others upon the contrary extream, have as groundleſly thought, that it is altogether fortuitous and caſual.

Amongſt thoſe who aſcribe every thing to the diſpenſation of a ſure and inevitable deſtiny, the *Stoicks*

Stoicks have been been always reckoned the chiefeſt combatants. It is well known that thoſe ſtupid and ſenſeleſs Philoſophers did teach, that all effects were neceſſarily produced by the natural order and *ſeries* of cauſes, which were from the outgoings of Eternity inſeperably chained together; ſo that neither Humane induſtry, nor the Divine power could alter what ſuch a conjunction of cauſes was to produce.

That humane Induſtry, care, and good menagery, cannot alter the decree of Fate, the *Stoick* moraliſt *Seneca* very fairly confeſſeth.

Fatis agimur, cedite fatis :
Non ſolicitæ poſſunt curæ
Mutare rati ſtamina fuſi.
Seneca in Oedip.

The ſame *Seneca* alſo affirms

that the ſupreme being is ſo ſtrictly tyeh to the *Sempeternal ſeries* and order of Cauſes, that he muſt follow, but cannot gain-ſay what is thus eſtabliſhed. *Quicquid eſt quod nos ſic vivere juſſit, ſic mori, eadem neceſſitate Deos alligat, irrevocabilis humana ac Divina pariter curſus vehit.* Sen. lib. de provid. 5.

There are two very dangerous Authors of great name and fame, who amongſt many other bad opinions, have recalled this Stoical dream, which was long ſince rejected; the one is the famous Mr. *Hobs*; the other the ſubtil author of that Book, entituled *Tractatus Theologico policitus*: Both which I may perhaps have occaſion to examine more particularly.

But if all things were thus eſtabliſhed by a fatal neceſſity, ſound reaſon would ſuggeſt to ſober Men, that it were a needleſs thing for the ſick to call for the Phyſitians aid.

aid. And indeed *Cicero* very ingeniouſly confeſſeth this: *Si fatum tibi eſt ex hoc morbo convaleſcere, ſive tu medicum adhibueris, ſive non adhibueris, convaleſces.—Si fatum tibi eſt non convaleſcere, ſive medicum adhibueris, ſive non non convaleſces, & alterutrum fatum eſt, medicum ergo adhibere nihil valet.* Cic. lib. de fato. And altho *Seneca* thinks he has fallen upon a very good anſwer, yet it is truly never a whit better. *Cum ſanitas* (inquit) *videatur de fato debetur et medico, quia ad nos beneficium fati per hujus manus venit*, lib. 2. nat. cap. 35. By which means the Phyſitian is as fatally determined to preſcribe the cure, as the ſick mans recovery is deſtinated.

The ages in which theſe Men lived being dark and blind, we ought as much to pity their caſe, as correct and reprehend

them. It is our happineſs that we are not left to the conduct of natural reaſon; and would God our thankful acknowledgments were anſwerable to the greatneſs of this bleſſing. I ſhall not need to ſtand in rejecting this Dream, I think the hazards this ſpeculation hath expoſed ſome of its favorites to, will be forcible enough to affright others from embracing it. I remember I have read of ſome whom this conceit had ſo far diſtracted, that they did caſt away their Swords and other weapons when their Enemies approached: ſaying, If it be our Fate to dye to keep our weapons will never preſerve us from Death. 'Tis alſo reported of the deluded *Mahumetans*, that in battel they take courage from this, that they are no ſooner born than fate ſeals upon their foreheads, how long they ſhall live, and what death they

ſhall

ſhall dye. Alas who would not pitty Men thus infatuated and bewitched! ſurely, as St. *Auguſtin* excellently ſpeaks *Si cor tuum non eſſet fatuum, non crederes fatum*, Tract. 37. in Joh.

Next the *Stoick* ſtand the Star-gazers and Aſtrologers, who attribute the ſhortneſs or extenſion of our lives to the bad or benign Aſpect and Conjunction of the Stars in the time of our Nativity. Now although I deny not that the Heavens have an influence upon inferior things, yet ſurely this ſecret and occult dominion Star-gazers plead for, is ſo manifeſtly croſs to reaſon and dayly experiences, that no man in his wit will affirm it. The Prophet hath long ſince adviſed us, *not to be diſmayed at the ſigns of Heaven*; adding, *the Heathen they are diſmayed at them*, *Jer.* 10. 2. As if it had been only peculiar to the Heathen part of the World,

who were ignorant of Gods Providence, to believe the vain predictions of Aſtrologers. *Babylon* was upbraided for her truſting Aſtrologers, Star-gazers, and monthly prognoſticators. *Iſa.* 47. 13. Theſe men confidently preſumed to foretell the time of Mens Death, and the eaſily deceived multitude gave a ready aſſent to whatever they ſpeke: ſo eaſie a matter it is to impoſe any thing upon the belief of the vulgar. The *Palmaſter* as fooliſhly pretendeth, that God hath ſealed upon every mans hand how long he ſhall live, and that obſerving men (as they would have us believe they are) can underſtand this by the lines and draughts in the palme of the hand. And or proof of this they aledg. *Job* 37. 7. where it is ſaid, *he ſealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.* But from this

place

place no ſuch thing can be collected: for *Elihu* is there taken up in expreſſing the greatneſs of Gods works, and the Divine power in commanding the Snow and the Rain, ſmall and great, to be on the Earth; and he addeth, *he ſealeth up the hand of every man.* That is, when Snow and Rain are upon the Earth, men cannot labour and toil; their hand is ſealed up, they cannot work.

Epicurus and his followers could never be reconciled to this opinion, but yet the account they give of this matter is every whit as extravagant and irrational: they being equally unhappy in the account they give of the begining and Period of beings.

The account theſe men give of the original of beings is ſo incredible, that no rational man can have any temptation to believe it; but this belongs not to the preſent diſ-

courſe. I ſhall therefore only conſider what they ſay of the Period of beings; and briefly their opinion is, that it is no more but the caſual and fortuitous ſeparation of thoſe particles of Matter that were united by a happy chance and hit.

This error is of an old date, and had long ere now paſt preſcription, if it had not been ſo ſuitable to the humours of bad men. The *Saducees*, whoſe Religigion it was to contradict the *Phariſees*, were very great ſticklers for this dream: ſome men have confined the Divine providence to the Stars, and plucked out ſublunary beings from his immediate Rule and Dominion. *Cicero* could not be perſwaded that God had any knowledg of things contingently future. Some to mend the matter, confeſs God may know the *general kinds* of things, but they will

will not allow that he knows every particular. For this they think is inconſiſtent with the immutability of the Deity: But others have been more illiberal in their conceſſions, thinking it enough if they grant that God hath a care of Mankind, altho he never regard leſſer matters: and that,

Curat magna Deus, fortunæ parva relinquit.

By means of theſe wild conceits this Error has proceeded from bad to worſe, yet very few of the old Philoſophers, or any other rank of men; (Atheiſts thoſe Anomalus births excepted) had ever that confidence in impiety, to ſay with the *Epicureans*, that the World is perfectly left to its own fortuitous and caſual reſolutions, or that I may expreſs it in their Poets own phraſe.

Sive

Sive nihil poſitum eſt, ſed ſors incerta vagatur,
Fertq; refertq; vices, & habent mortalia caſum.

That the Period of every mans life is not ſo caſual and fortuitous as theſe men imagine, may be made evident by clear teſtimonies from Scripture concerning the particular Providence whereby God takes care of every particular thing in the World. But becauſe I will have occaſion to conſider this afterwards, I ſhall now add only an inſtance or two from Scripture, whereby it may appear that the moſt ſeemingly caſual Periods of men are ordered by an infinite Wiſdom, and fall under the Divine Rule and Dominion. And firſt the man-ſlayer, who killeth his Neighbour unawars, ſeems to be as caſual a buſineſs as can be: and yet we may read how far the

the Divine providence is concerned in this particular, *Exod.* 21. 13. But farther, one of *Epicurus* Diſciples would readily conclude that *Ahabs* death was a piece of chance, and governed by no Supreme power. It was but an Archer's drawing his Bow at a venture, which by chance killed *Ahab.* But the word of truth informs us, that by this means the prophecy 1 *Kings*, 21. 19. was fulfilled: and that it came not to paſs without the Divine providence, who rules among the children of Men.

And now I have done with the two erroneous extreams which ſome men have inconſideratly run to for ſhelter: the next thing I premiſed was to lay down the two common opinions that offer fair for removing the difficulty; but I muſt ſay (for the thing is palpable,) that I am now only to give the two former rejected opinions

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of the *Stoicks* and *Epicureans* dreſſed up in better apparel, and much refined from the impure dregs of Heatheniſm: as,

1. Some run to the abſolute and inconditionate Decrees of God, and tell us, that from the outgoings of Eternity, previous to the Divine conſideration of circumſtances in which men are to be placed, God has ſo abſolutely determined the Period of every mans life, that it can neither be lengthned nor extended by care and diligence; nor ſhortened by intemperance, Sword or Plague.

2. Others who ſee the inconveniencies and abſurdities that follow upon the granting that opinion to be true, are induced to believe that thePeriod of every mans life is ordinarily mutable; and may be both extended & ſhortned: yet ſtill they grant that God may, as it ſeems good to him, either extend or ſhorten it. There

There are four very conſiderable particulars that ſeem to ſtrengthen the firſt opinion. *Firſt*, There are many plain places of Scripture that conclude the days of every man to be bounded by the Divine determination. *Secondly*, There are many examples in Scripture which ſhew that the Period of every Mans Life is from the out-goings of Eternity, ſet and bounded in by the Divine will. *Thirdly*, It is a common opinion that the futurition of all things depends upon the Divine will, antecedently to which, things are only poſſible: and therefore, *Fourthly*, we can never give a rational and ſatisfying account, how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the *Baſis* of the ſure abſolute Decree.

Upon the other hand thoſe who plead

plead for the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life, endeavour to remove the fore-named doubt, and to ſhew the great inconveniences it is lyable to: That it quite evacuates the uſe of the means, and encourages men to expoſe themſelves to any danger; *&c.* as I ſhall endeavour to make appear afterwards.

And now I come to the chief thing I aimed at in this undertaking. *viz.* To attempt a ſatisfying anſwer of the preſent doubt, in the proſecution of which intendment I ſhall obſerve this Method. *Firſt*, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined. *Secondly*, I ſhall ſhew in what ſenſe it is not determined: and *Thirdly*, how it is mutable and may be extended or ſhortned. I begin with the firſt, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined:

ned: and I ſhall endeavour to do this in the two following particulars.

1. The Period of every mans Life is ſo far determined that it is not without a Period. To determine, ſignifieth properly to ſet bounds or limits to any thing. Now ſince *it is appointed for all men once to dye*, every mans life is encloſed and bounded within a certain number of years. And I muſt add, that if I be not very much miſtaken, this is the genuin ſenſe of the moſt, if not of all, thoſe places of Scripture that expreſs the determination of Mans days: and indeed *Jobs* words *ſeeing his days are determined, &c.* ſeem to mean no other thing but this; and in this ſenſe it is unqueſtionable that God has *appointed our bounds which we cannot paſs.*

But 2. the Period of every particular Mans Life is determined

in

in reſpect of the Divine preſcience. Now becauſe this is a very conſiderable particular, and, as I told in the explaining of the text, that which was intended by *Job* when he ſays, *the number of his months is with thee*; I ſhall therefore endeavour to make out this truth by the plaineſt and moſt convincing evidence that can be.

In order to this I ſhall ſhew that God hath a perfect comprehenſion of all things, paſt, preſent, or to come; and by conſequence fore-knows the Period of every Mans Life. *Secondly*, I ſhall prove this by plain evidence from Scriptural Examples. *Thirdly*, I ſhall make it appear, that it is ſolely the prerogative of our Maker to know the Period of every Mans Life. And *laſtly*, I ſhall anſwer the moſt Material objections and doubts that are brought againſt it.

Firſt,

First, that God hath a perfect comprehenſion of all things paſt, preſent, and to come, is ſo reaſonable a principle of natural Religion, that it hath been generally owned by the wiſeſt and moſt learned Heathen. And thoſe impious wretches who at every turn take the name of God in vain, in atteſting him in the truth of what ſometimes themſelves know is falſe, ſufficiently implie that they believe Gods Infinite knowledg. Beſides the truth of this is plainly held out in Scripture; it was to this city of refuge *Peter* did flee when his love was ſeemingly called in queſtion; *Lord* (ſays he) *Thou knoweſt all things*, *John.* 21. 17. And the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* makes uſe of this Topick to induce us to circumſpection, *all things are naked and open to the eyes of him with whom we have to do. Heb.* 4. 13. And

God himſelf appeals to the infinity of his knowledg in the demonſtration of his Deity, and challengeth the Idol-Gods *to produce their cauſe; and ſhew what ſhall happen that the latter end of things may be known*, *Iſa.* 41. 21, 22. The Pſalmiſt upbraids the Idol Gods, in that they have eyes and ſee not: but he always comforts himſelf with this conſideration, that the God in whom he truſts does behold his condition; all which inſtances make it undoubtable that God hath an infinite cognizance, and that nothing can be hid from his eyes, who equally beholds things paſt, preſent, and to come.

Now if it be ſo plain and evident that God hath ſuch an Infinite knowledg, no man can reaſonably doubt that God knows the Period of every Mans Life; but if any ſhall ask how is it that God knows

knows certainly the Period of Humane Life, I anſwer, that it is a very bold and fruitleſs enquiry, which concerns not us to know; his underſtanding is infinite, and ſhall ſilly Man think to comprehend and meaſure it by his finite knowledg? The Pſalmiſt modeſtly acknowledgeth that *ſuch knowledg is too wonderfull for him, it is high* (ſays he) *I cannot attain unto it, Pſal.* 139. 6. and elſewhere he tells us, it is only bold Atheiſts who ask, *How doth God know, and is there knowledg in the moſt high?*

I confeſs the Schoolmen (as they are called) weary themſelves with ſuch vain Diſputes, and they are as peremptory in determining the the manner of Gods knowledg of future things, as if they had proved their aſſertions with Mathematical demonſtrations. Some of them tell us, that things future

are really preſent with God in Eternity; which methinks is a very noble Paradox. Others run to the Divine decree, and make it the *Baſis* of the Divine knowledg. Others tell us that God in contemplating his own eſſence ſees all the repreſentations and *Ideas* of future things; and therefore knows them certainly. We might add many other conjectures, but theſe may let us know how vainly curious ſuch wits are: but that which may ſatisfy any ſober enquirer is this, that God is Infinite in knowledg, and therefore knows certainly the Period of every Mans Life, it being truly future.

The Second thing I premiſed was to prove that God knows the Period of Humane Life by examples from Scripture. Now I think this will need but little proof, ſince the predictions concerning the Period of perſons are ſo many and plain,

plain; ſo many Hundred years foretold, and ſo punctually fullfilled without a failure in a tittle. The death of *Eli*'s two Sons, *Hophni* and *Phineas* was foretold, 1 *Sam*, 2. 24. and punctually fulfilled, as we may read, *chap.* 4. 11. both the manner and place of *Jezebels* death was foretold, *and the Dogs ſhall eat Jezebel in the Portion of Jezreel, and there ſhall be none to bury her*, 2 *King.* 9. 10. which prediction was fulfilled without a failure in any circumſtances, as we read in the cloſe of that Chapter. But the moſt remarkable inſtances are thoſe manifold predictions concerning the death of Holy Jeſus. *All the Prophets* (as the Apoſtle obſerveth *Act.* 3) *have foretold that Chriſt ſhould ſuffer*; they have condeſcended upon the manner of his ſuffering, upon the time, and upon the circumſtances relating to it.

The Pſalmiſt in a figurative ſpeech, (a very uſual way of expreſſing things amongſt the Prophets) ſpeaks of his being pierced: ſo doth the Prophet *Zechariah*, *and they ſhall look upon me whom they have pierced*, *Zech.* 12. 10. *Daniel* did punctually ſpeak of the time. *And after threeſcore and two weeks ſhall Meſſiah be cut off, but not for himſelf*, *Dan* 9. 26.

But farther God doth not only know the actual, but alſo the poſſible bounds of every Mans Life; that is, God doth know that a Period ſhould have been put to the days of many Men, if they had not by their hearty repentance and devoute prayers prevented its laſh. It was King *Hezekia's* prayer to God that extended his life fifteen years, for the meſſage which God did ſend to *Hezekiah* was this; *Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt dye and not live.*

live. But he having prayed to God gets this return; *I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years. Isa.* 38. 5. from which it is plain, that God knew that a Period should have been then put to his days, if his prayer had not prevented it. It was the people of *Nineves* repentance that prevented the threatned judgment that should have put a Period to their lives. Which Method if the old World had observed, they had prevented that Fatal Flood in which they were drowned.

Thirdly, That it is only the prerogative of God Almighty to know the Period of every Mans Life will be easily granted. For those who deny Gods universal cognizance, will never attribute it to any creature: and those who do acknowledg the infinity of the

Divine knowledg, will never ſay it belongs to the creature. The only thing that we are to conſider are theſe pretenſions to a foreknowledg of things which the Heathen world bragged of, but this Plea is eaſily removed. For 1. in thoſe dark ages of the World it was an eaſy thing to impoſe upon the faith of the vulgar, who in all ages have been very credulous and apt to be thus deceived. *Secondly*, It is well known that there pretended predictions were very *enigmatical* and dubious. *Aio te Æacida Romanos vincere poſſe*, was a Problem, rather than a Prophecy, which might have concluded both ways. *Thirdly*, The moſt part of their pretended predictions were only gueſſes and conjectures, which for the moſt part were falſe and groundleſs; yet *Fourthly*, I do not deny but God may for ends known to himſelf reveal

veal the Period of particular perſons, when, and to whom he thinks fit. It is therefore ſingly the property of God Almighty who graſps all times, and who can never be impeached for giving a wrong divination, to know the Period of every Mans Life.

In the laſt place I come to conſider thoſe Material doubts and objectione this principls may be urged with. As 1. It is hardly credible that God doth certainly know the Period of Humane Life, it being only contingently future: this objection *Cicero* could not anſwer, therefore being perſwaded that ſome things were contingently future, he thought God could not know ſuch things. But the difficulty is not ſo great as to make us deny God hath perfect knowledg of things contingently future. For 1. The light of nature may teach us that we muſt not

not reject what is plain, becauſe we cannot comprehend what is obſcure. That there is in man a rational Soul is beyond doubt; and yet how irreconcilable are the opinions of learned men about its original, whether it be by ſeminal production, or by immediate creation. Again the union of Soul and Body is a very myſterious riddle, and the moſt ingenious *hypotheſis* has been confeſſed to be unſatisfactory; and yet no man was ever ſo far infatuated as to deny that in man there is a Soul and Body. In like manner, what altho Humane Reaſon cannot reconcile the Divine knowledg with the contingency of actions? yet may it not reſt ſatisfied with this, that God knows all contingencies becauſe his underſtanding is infinite. And indeed the predictions in Scripture are ſo remarkable and plain evidences that God knows all things, that

that now it cannot be reaſonably queſtioned. But ſuppoſe Revelation had taught us nothing of this, yet we might by natural principles know that God is the moſt perfect being that can be imagined, and therefore of Infinite comprehenſion; that he is our Maker, and therefore muſt know all the intrigues of his creatures.

But *Secondly*, the Divine foreknowledg is not the cauſe of things (for otherwiſe criminal actions which do not eſcape his eye, ſhould be cauſed by him who cannot tempt any man to ſin) which is impoſſible: if God ſhould reveal to me that *Titius* were certainly to do ſuch a thing the next day, my foreknowledg does not neceſſitate *Titius* to do that act: ſo that upon the one hand as the foreknowledg of it hath no influence upon the manner of its production, nor croſſeth the Humane liberty

liberty; for the Divine foreknowledg is not the cauſe why things exiſt, but it ſuppoſeth the exiſtence of things: ſo upon the other hand the contingency of the Period of Humane Life does not infer, that it cannot be certainly known by an infinite underſtanding who graſps all things and ſeaſons.

But the great difficulty is, how the Divine foreknowledg can be reconciled with the Divine promiſes, commands, comminations and prohibitions: how it can conſiſt with the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to threaten men with ſhortneſs of life if they continue wicked and rebellious; and to pramiſe length of days if men will obey his commandments, while-as he well knows that the wicked man will continue in his wickedneſs, and be filthy ſtill, and that the vertuous and good man will perſevere in well doing.

I confeſs, this is a very great difficulty, and hath induced many learned men to doubt if God knows things contingently future, not that they would impeach any of the Divine perfections, or derogate from the infinity of his knowledg; but only they think that the nature of things contingently future, is ſuch that they cannot be known; as it is no diminution from Omnipotency, to ſay things impoſſible, or which imply a contradiction, fall not under its object.

But yet ſince Scripture hath ſo clearly revealed to us the Divine foreknowledg of future actions, methinks he is very raſh and inconſiderate that doubts it: it is a remarkable ſentence of *Tertullian*'s, *Præſcientia Dei tantos habet teſtes, quantos fecit prophetas.* Hence the learned *Epiſcopius* tells us, that his Religion and

and the reverence he had to the Divine Majeſty would never ſuffer him to admit this argument, which reflected ſo much upon the truth of Divine Predictions.

But I anſwer more particularly, that Gods promiſes and threatnings are ſerious, becauſe altho God knows that ſome men who are threatned will continue in their wickedneſs; yet it being in their power to turn from their Sins, and the Divine threatning being an argument which ſhould prevail upon men; no man can doubt but God is ſerious with ſinners in ſuch caſes. If a parent did certainly know that his Son were to commit a criminal act, would any man think that that Parents threatning of his Son, if he did commit that act, were void of ſincerity. But 2. As God knows that ſome wicked men, notwithſtanding of the ſevereſt threatning, will continue in their

their ſins: yet 1. He knows that even ſuch obdurate perſons may do otherwiſe. and 2. He knows that many men would have continued in their ſins, if they had not been threatned with puniſhments. We have no reaſon to think that the people of *Ninevie* would have turned unto God if they had never been threatned. Now though God knew that *Ninevie* when threatned would repent, yet ſince he alſo knew that if they had not been threatned they ſhould have continued in their wickedneſs; therefore no man can queſtion the ſeriouſneſs of the Divine threatnings.

And thus I have diſpatched the firſt particular, how the Period of every Mans Life may be ſaid to be determined. I come in the next place to enquire in what ſenſe it is not determined. Now becauſe I have already rejected the *Stoical* Fate

Fate all that I ſhall ſpeak concerning this head may be comprehended in this following particulars: *viz.*

The Period of every Mans Life is not fatally limited and bounded by any abſolute or inconditionate decree of God Almighty. Now becauſe many learned men violently urge, that God hath from the outgoings of Eternity abſolutly decreed the bounds of every Mans Life, without any conſideration of thoſe circumſtances in which they are to be placed; ſo that men, do what they pleaſe, can neither extend nor ſhorten the leaſe of their life: I ſhall therefore endeavour to make this aſſertion plain, and remove thoſe objections that it may ſeem lyable to; and the rather, becauſe in ſuch kind of aſſertions as are beſides the common opinion, men will be ready to ſuſpect ſome ſiniſturous deſign.

That

That the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatally determined by any ſecret inconditional decree, will appear from the arguments we ſhall make uſe of in proving the inobility of the Period of every Mans Life. Now I ſhall only conſider thoſe abſurdities and inconveniencies that follow upon the admiſſion of the contrary opinion. As *firſt*, if the Period of Humane Life were Fatally determined, then thoſe wretched miſcreants who with their own hands put a Period to their Lives, may eaſily excuſe themſelves before their Judg: for ſince it is ſuppoſed that they are phyſically predetermined to do ſo, how can it be imagined that they could do otherwiſe? is there any reſiſting of the Divine decree? alas, it was not in their power to help it, & how then can they be condemned for it. It is a known Maxim, *Nemo*

peccatin eo quod vitare non poteſt: the neceſſity they are plac'd in, ſeems to excuſe their ſin, but if notwithſtanding we ſhall ſuppoſe that ſuch brutiſh actions are really criminal, we run our ſelves upon another abſurdity, and that is, we reflect upon the Divine holineſs and goodneſs; for if God has truly determined thoſe brutiſh actions by a previous, ſecret, and unalterable decree, if he hath before irrevocably determined, and ſo intangled in ſuch a train of cauſes as ſhould neceſſarily make them offer violence to themſelves; how can we vindicate the Divine Sancty from the blot of being the author of ſin? alas, daily experience ſhews us, how apt men are to make uſe of this argument for their own vindication, when they do what is criminal; they tell us they were fatally determined by an external power in acting them. And with this conſidera-

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tion they ſolace themſelves, as if they were as innocent as Fools or Mad-Men.

But let no man deceive himſelf in arguing ſo fooliſhly, the Apoſtle St. *James*, very forcibly rejects this opinion. *Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed* Jam. 2. 13, 14. The wiſeman in his ſenſe, after the certainty of things, concludes his 7*th* Chapter of the Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* thus, *Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have ſought out many inventions.* Pray then let us reject every opinion that teacheth God does neceſſitate men to ſin, for nothing can be more injurious to God than this. To think to palliat the

buſineſs by ſaying God is under no law, is but a lawleſs and unreaſonable pretext; for the everlaſting rectitude of his ſpotleſs nature, is more than any external Law: and pray, what can truth & juſtice do, but what holy is and juſt? The diſtinction between the act and the pravity of the act, the former of which God determins man to; but not to the latter, is as vain and frivolous. For the pravity of every wicked act is inſeparable from it. And farther, the Divine commands particularly prohibit the act, and I think upon no other ground, but becauſe the formality of Sin conſiſts in the act it ſelf. It is indeed ſtrange to conſider thoſe Platonick and imaginary notions ſome men run to: but I think it needleſs to take a particular view of ſuch dreams.

But as this Opinion ſadly reflects upon the Holineſs of God, ſo

ſo it is highly inconſiſtent with the liberty of Man's Will in the choice of the means. That there is a free Principle in Man, is ſo plain, that he who denies this, muſt engage himſelf againſt Experience and Reaſon. There is no Man who does wickedly, but he perceives he may do otherwiſe: the ſick man is not conſtrained to neglect the means for his recovery; neither is the Phyſitian forced to preſcribe this and no other remedy: Men act not as Machines, but they have a Free Principle, whereby they may chuſe what they think is beſt and moſt convenient: It's true, the Will, ſince *Adam*'s Fall, is corrupted, and moſtly enclined to that which is evil; but yet the Fall did not deſtroy Man's Freedom, it made no Phyſical change, only the Faculties of the Soul are morally vitiated and corrupted.

But if the Will were Phyſically (as they ſpeak) determined *ad unum*, it were unreaſonable to think that the ſick perſon, who neglects the means, could do otherwiſe. And alas! doth not Experience convince us, that men of this Perſwaſion neglect the uſe of lawful means which God hath appointed, only becauſe they dream that if God has decreed that they ſhall die, then it is needleſs to uſe the means; and if God has determined that they ſhall live, whether they uſe or neglect the means, they ſhall live.

But you'll ſay, God doth not only Decree the *End*, but alſo the *Means*. I anſwer, This Plea doth not a whit diminiſh or remove the difficulty, ſince they ſuppoſe that the Means are as abſolutely decreed as the End: which quite deſtroys the liberty of Man's Will, and leaveth no place for any choice. Third-

Thirdly, This Opinion leaves no place for praiſe to the Learned Phyſitian, nor for diſpraiſe to the unskilful Empyrick. Firſt, The skilful Phyſitian can claim no praiſe; for altho it be granted that he hath wiſely conſidered the condition of the ſick, and the nature of the Diſeaſe; tho he hath preſcribed apt Remedies, & in all things behaved well, yet ſince he did no other thing but what he was determined to do by an external force, who can think he merits any praiſe, if he could have done otherwiſe but would not, then he might in reaſon claim it; but the caſe according to the preſent *Hypotheſis* is quite oppoſite. But, Secondly, neither can we in reaſon blame the unskilful *Quack-Doctor*, who neither knows the nature of the Diſeaſe, nor of thoſe Medicines he preſcribeth. Alas! poor man does no more than what

he was forced to do, and he could not do otherwiſe; why then ſhould he be blamed for any failure or miſtake he commits.

Fourthly, The natural and genuine Conſequence of this Doctrine, is, to make men like Fools or Mad-men, expoſe themſelves to any danger: For inſtance, What need we be afraid to run upon any Precipice, if God hath determined the period of every man's life, there is no fear to encounter with any ſeeming danger; men may ſafely enough leap into the fire, or caſt themſelves into the deep, for there is no fear that they ſhall be hurt or periſh, unleſs the Almighty hath determined it; and if this be, they may perſwade themſelves they could not do otherwiſe, for the Decree is unalterable, and cannot be repealed.

Nor is this true only in Theory and Speculation, but it may appear

pear to have ſuch bad effects, by the ſad experience of poor deluded Creatures. Alas! do we not hear the Vulgar frequently comfort any who are in trouble with this conſideration, that God hath decreed it ſhould be ſo, if theſe perſons did only mean that God exerciſeth a ſpecial Providence in the world, and ruleth among the Children of men, no body had ever blamed them: but this is not their meaning, for they plainly declare by ſuch kind of ſpeech, that all things come to paſs fatally. I have heard ſome wretched Sinners, who had committed great and ſcandalous ſins, excuſe themſelves, by ſaying, they were decreed to do ſo, and God's will muſt be accompliſhed,

It were very eaſie to multiply many Abſurdities which flow from this Doctrine by a natural Conſequence; but theſe few I have named

med may abundantly ſatisfie every conſidering man, and ſhew him how pernicious and dangerous it is; but before I conclude, I ſhall conſider the four Arguments I mentioned before, which I ſaid, ſeemed to ſtrengthen and confirm this Opinion, as

Firſt, *There are many places of Scripture which ſeem to conclude, That the Period of every Man's Life is determined.* I ſhall mention ſome of the moſt remarkable Texts of Scripture brought to defend this, as firſt, *Pſal.* 31.15. *My times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hand of mine Enemies.* From hence ſome draw this unexpected Concluſion, That God hath abſolutely decreed the Period of every Man's Life. Now I think no conſidering man ſhould ever have gueſſed this to be the Pſalmiſt's meaning; for the Text only holds out the Divine care and Provi-

Providence, whereby he does superintend and continue every individual thing in the world in their Beings, and therefore is it that *David* makes his application to God, that he would deliver him from the hand of his Enemy; which methinks had been a needleſs Petition, if he had imagined that God had abſolutely determined the period of his life. Secondly, *Pſal.* 39. 5. *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the meaſure of my days what it is, that I may know how frail I am.* This place is ſtrangely brought to confirm the former Opinion: For the Pſalmiſt doth not deſire the knowledge of the Period of his life; he does not ask when he ſhall die, only he begs the Divine aid and aſſiſtance, that he may wiſely improve the ſhort time he hath to live. I cannot ſtand to conſider ſuch Texts of Scripture as theſe, which

which are no ways acquainted with the Doctrine they are brought to defend. There is only one Text that ſeems to favour this Opinion, *viz.* Job 14. 5. *Seeing his Days are determined, the number of his Months are with thee, thou haſt appointed his bounds that he cannot paſs.* But I have conſidered this all along in this Diſcourſe. I confeſs, ſome in return to this ſay, that all *Job*'s words are not approved of God, therefore it is hard to conclude any thing from them; but this is a very inſufficient anſwer. That which ſatisfieth me is this, that *Job* here only ſays that our days are determined, but he ſpeaks nothing how they are determined; now in what ſenſe the Period of every Man's life may be ſaid to be determined, I have already conſidered,

Secondly, *There are many Examples*

amples in Scripture, which ſhew that the Period of every Man's Life is bounded and limited by an abſolute Decree. The moſt remarkable is, that *Act.* 4. 28, *Both* Herod *and* Pontius Pilate, *with the Gentiles and the people of Iſrael were gathered together for to do whatſoever thy hand and thy counſel determined before to be done:* The Scribes and Phariſees frequently ſtirred up the multitude *to lay hands upon Chriſt*, but their endeavours were always to no purpoſe; and the accounr the Scripture gives for this, is, *becauſe his* hour *was not come.* In return to this, I ſhall deſire it may be conſidered, that when we ſay the Period of every Man's Life may be extended or ſhortned, the meaning is not, that it is impoſſible that it can be otherwiſe: we never doubted but the great Governour of the World may make what

what reſerved Caſes he pleaſes from the ordinary courſe of things; and no wonder though the preſent Caſe, which is upon all accounts ſo extraordinary, be exempt from the general Rule; and for ſuch exempt Caſes, to which there ought to be allowance made, no reaſonable man can think they do any prejudice to the thing I have been proving.

Thirdly, *It is a common opinion, that the futurition of things depend only upon the Divine will; antecedently to which things are only poſſible.* In anſwer to which, I eaſily grant, that there is nothing that comes to paſs contrary to the Divine will; the moſt criminal actions are ordered by his Infinite Wiſdom; and permitted to be. But yet we have no ground to think that he decrees every future action. Elſe it were hard to vindecate the holineſs of God; upon

upon which conſideration many Learned Men have been induced to deny Gods immediate concurring with the Creature in all its operations; & yet we need not run our ſelves upon this Rock; for we may ſafely enough maintain that the Divine will is immediatly efficatious; for God who created man with a freedom of will, deſigned that he ſhould act without conſtraint, and the reaſon why man acts freely, is becauſe God wills men to act ſo; which plainly diſcovers, that the moſt contingent actions depend immediatly upon the Divine will.

Fourthly, *We can never give a rational nor ſatisfying account how the Divine knowledg concerning the Period of Humane Life is infallible and certain, if it be not founded upon the ſure* Baſis *of an abſolute decree.* This objection I have partly removed already, while

I ſhewed that God knows whatſo ever is true, becauſe his cogniſance is Infinite; wherefore it is unreaſonable to think that God could not have a perfect comprehenſion of things; if he had not decreed them abſolutely. Now to make this yet more plain, I ſhall prove by inſtances from Scripture, that God hath a certain knowledg of thoſe things which he never decreed: as abſolutly future. And *Firſt*, It is a very remarkable inſtance which we have, 1. *Sam.* 23. 11, 12. where *David* hearing that *Saul* was to come to *Keilah*, he carneſtly beſeecheth God to tell him, if the men of *Keilah* will deliver him and his men into the hand of *Saul*; and if Saul will come down. To both which he gets this anſwer, *That Saul will come down*; and that *the Keilites will deliver him up*. And yet the Event ſhews that none of thoſe

came

came to paſs, becauſe the fulfilling of both did depend upon *Davids* ſtaying in *Keilah*. And yet God certainly knew, that if *David* had not departed from *Keilah*, they ſhould have delivered him into the hands of *Saul*. And farther it is very evident, that *David* was not inquiring what were the preſent propenſions, and inclinations of the *Keilites*; but what ſhould be the event of his ſtaying, and accordingly he receives an anſwer from God. Another Inſtance we have 2 *Kings*, 13. 19. where *Eliſha* the Prophet is very wroth with *Joaſh* King of *Iſrael*, becauſe he did not ſmite upon the ground five or ſix times; and the reaſon the Prophet adds, is, *for then hadſt thou ſmitten Syria till thou hadſt conſumed it*. Which makes it as evident as any thing can be, that God foreknew that *Joaſh* ſhould have ſmitten *Syria* till he had con-

ſumed it, if he had ſmitten upon the ground five or ſix times. It were no difficult task to prove this by a multitude of inſtances from Scripture, but I think I need add no more for the ſatisfaction of conſidering Men; and for others, a Million of demonſtrations will be urged to no purpoſe. And thus I have done with the Second thing I propoſed, that God hath not by any abſolute or inconditionate Decree fatally determined the Period of every Mans Life.

I proceed to the Third thing propoſed, namely, whether the Period of every Mans Life be mutable. And before I prove it to be ſo, I muſt premiſe two cautions. *Firſt*, when we ſay the Period of every Mans Life is mutable, we mean no more but that it may be ſhortned by our intemperance, or neglect of the means; and be extended by our good managery and reli-

religious manner of living. *Secondly*, When I ſay the Period of every Mans Life is moveable, the meaning is not that it is neceſſarily ſo, and that it cannot be otherwiſe; for this would not be conſiſtent with our dependent condition; therefore there is allowance to be made to extraordinary caſes. The acts of Divine providence in the government of Humane affairs, are ſometimes extraordinary, and therefore it muſt be left to his Infinite Wiſdom & Goodneſs, to make what reſerved caſes he thinks fit from the general rule. Yet for ordinary the Period of Humane Life is mutable; and God doth not exclude the power of ſecond cauſes in governing the World.

Theſe things being premiſed, I doubt not but to offer ſuch arguments for the proof of the mutability of the Period of every Mans

Life, as ſhall be ſufficient for the conviction of any man who is not blinded by prejudice, or prepoſſeſſed with ſome contrary notion. And

Firſt, Upon the obſervance of the Divine laws, there are many promiſes in Scripture aſſuring us of length of days; & on the other ſide, there are many threatnings of cuting ſhort the days of the wicked. Thus God promiſes length of days to obedient Children. *Exod.* 20.12. *Honour thy Father and Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Deut.* 4.40. *Thou ſhalt keep therefore his Statutes and his Commandements which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy Children after thee, and that thou mayeſt prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* And particularly the Lord

tells

tells *Solomon*, 1 *King.* 3. 4. *If thou wilt walk in my ways to keep my Statutes and my Commandments, as thy father* David *did walk, then I will lengthen thy dys.* The Psalmist encourageth men to consider the case of the poor upon this Motive. *Psal* 42. 1, 2. *Blessed is he that considereth the Poor, the Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, &c.* And upon this acount the Wise-Man also perswadeth men to observe and keep Gods laws. *Prov.* 3. 1, 2. *My Son forget not my law, but let thine heart keep my Commandments: for length of dys, and long life, and peace shall they add to thee.*

How much the observance of the duties of Religion conduce to our health, is a thing daily experience attests; and therefore the Apostle very excellently exhorts *Timothy, to exercise himself unto Godliness, for it is profitable unto all things,*

having promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come, 1 Tim. 4. 8. Religion is as a bridle to keep men within due bounds in their eating and drinking; it forbids all manner of exceſs which impares our bodily health, and obliges men to make uſe of lawful means for their preſervation and recovery. If we conſult experience, we ſhall find theſe to be the men who for ordinary enjoy the longeſt lives: it is true ſome good men may be naturally of a brittle conſtitution, and others God may remove for ſecret ends known to himſelf; yet for ordinary, the Godly man, whoſe natural temper is ſtrong, hath the advantage of the wicked man; and certainly Religion in its due tendency preſcribes the beſt rules for long life.

As Righteouſneſs tendeth to life, ſo he that purſueth evil (as the Wiſe

Wiſe-Man tells us) *purſueth it to his own death*, Prov. 11. 19. We have a large Catalogue of the Puniſhments inflicted for ſin, *Exod.* 26. Where more particularly *v.* 16. the Lord threatens to *appoint over thoſe who obey not his Laws, terror, conſumption, and the burning ague*: & that Men may not fooliſhly think all theſe are but threatnings which God intends not to inflict upon poor Man, the Prophet *Iſaiah* tells us, *if ye refuſe and rebel, ye ſhall be devoured with the Sword*, for the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it. *Iſa.* 1. 20. And the wiſe-man concluds it as certain, *Prov.* 10. 27. *The years of the wicked ſhall be ſhortned*: and to conclude, the Pſalmiſt alſo tells us, *bloody and deceitful men ſhall not live out half their days*. *Pſal.* 55. 23. which the Poet very well expreſſeth,

Ad Generum Cereris, ſine cæde ac ſanguine pauci,
Deſcendunt Reges, et ſicca morte Tyranni.

And the truth of this may be evident likewiſe from common Experience, by which it will appear, that no men are ſo obnoxious to Diſeaſes as the wicked, who ſpend their time *in chambering and wantonneſs, in riot and exceſſs. Who hath woe? who hath ſorrow? who hath wounds without cauſe? they that tarry long at the wine*, Prov. 23. 29, 30. What the Wiſe-man ſays of one kind of Vice, may be ſaid of all, *They lead down to the Chambers of death*, Prov. 7. 27. But theſe things are ſo obvious, that I need not to enlarge upon them. I ſhall conclude this Argument with this conſideration, that ſince God Almighty

mighty promiſes to extend and lengthen out, or prolong their life, who walk piouſly and obſerve his Statutes, and threatens to ſhorten the days of the wicked, who refuſe to obey his Laws, it cannot be rationally imagined that the Period of every Man's Life is abſolutely determined.

Another Argument to confirm our Aſſertion, may be taken from the pious & devout prayers of the righteous, and their turning from their ſins by an hearty repentance, both which conduce to the lengthening out of their days. I put Repentance and Prayer together, becauſe of their near affinity to one another. Now that both theſe may be the Moral Cauſe of extending our Lives, may appear to be true from common Experience, beſides the many Aſſertions and Promiſes in Scripture to this purpoſe. Firſt, The truth of this

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may be evident from Experience, by which it will appear, that if Men had hearkned to *Noah*'s Doctrine, if they had repented of their wickedneſs within the ſpace allowed to them, they had not periſhed in the Deluge of Water. Of repenting *Nineve* we read, *That God ſaw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil he had ſaid that he would do unto them, and he did it not*, Jonah 3. 10. It was *Hezekiah*'s Prayers and Tears that prolonged his life. *Go* (ſaith the Lord to his Prophet *Iſaiah*) *and ſay to Hezekiah, Thus ſaith the Lord, the God of David thy Father, I have heard thy prayer, I have ſeen thy tears, behold I will add unto thy days fifteen years*, Iſa. 38. 5. And if Prayer were of no force, to what purpoſe were men ſo earneſt in their ſickneſs, to beg the prayers of o-

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thers on their behalf. I confeſs if the Period of every Mans Life were fatally determined, our Prayers ſhould be very needleſs. For can we be ſo ſenſleſs as to imagine, that our Prayers can move God to change his unalterable Statutes and Decrees.

But beſides common experience, the truth of this is likewiſe atteſted by plain evidences from Scripture. *At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: If that Nation againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a kingdom to plant it; If it do evil in my ſight, that it obey not my voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I ſaid I would benefit them.* *Jer.* 18. 7, 8, 9, 10.

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Methinks this is ſo plain an evidence of the efficacy of repentance, that no reaſonable man can have any doubt concerning it. But alas, if God had from the outgoings of Eternity fatally determined the deſtruction of Nations and Kingdoms by an abſolute and inconditionate decree, Repentance could never alter the determination.

It is the Apoſtles advice *Jam.* 5. 14. *Is any ſick among you? let him call for the Elders of the Church, and let them pray over him.* I know there are other means to be made uſe of in order to the procuring of health than repentance and prayer, and of theſe we ſhall ſpeak anon: but yet this I think may be truly ſaid, that ſometimes, when all other remedies have been either ineffectual or not to be had, repentance and prayer have done the buſineſs, and compleated the cure. And ſurely theſe are duties

duties profitable at all times.

I know the Church of *Rome* tell us many extravagant Stories of the wonders and miracles that have been performed by the prayers of Holy Men: those I shall not now mention, only I shall say, that altho it is not credible that the Prayers of Saints upon the Earth, do either mitigate and alleviate the pains of those that are in Hell; or free them from that miserable state, (as some men have confidently enough reported:) yet it is sufficiently credible that *the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much*, Jam. 5. 16.

A *Third* Argument to prove that our lives may be extended or shortned, may be taken from the use of medicaments. Common reason will teach Men, that it is needless to prescribe any Medicine to those that are dead; and truly the case would be much alike, if the Period of

of every Mans Life were determined by an inconditionate Decree. For altho men might then make uſe of medicaments, yet I think I may truly ſay that their operation ſhould be very ineffectual. But that men may to good purpoſe employ the Phyſitian when they are ſick, and expect by the bleſſing of God, benefit by the uſe of Medicaments applied by the art of Phyſick, no reaſonable man can doubt.

That the lives of many have been lengthned and prolonged by the excellent remedies, applied by the expert and skilfull Phyſitian, is a truth ſo obvious to common experience, that I need not enlarge upon it. And on the other ſide, how many have died before their time, only by their imploying ignorant Phyſitians! It is a famous inſtance that we have recorded of one *Manes*, the Father of the *Manichees*,

nichees, who having returned into *Perſia* at that time when the Kings Son lay ſick of a dangerous diſeaſe, he amongſt many other Phyſitians was preſent: all the others plainly declared that the diſeaſe was dangerous; but *Manes*, who was only a pretended Phyſitian, confidently deſired that they might be all removed, and he would take care of the Kings Son, & withall promiſed to reſtore him to health in a ſhort ſpace: but the event was quite contrary, for within a ſhort time the Kings Son died; which did ſo provoke the King of *Perſia*, that he inſtantly cauſed *Manes* to be put to a miſerable Death. What miſchief has been done by unskilfull Phyſitians, too many ſad examples do daily atteſt; but yet if the Period of every Mans Life were determin'd by an, abſolute and inconditionate decree, no man could blame the ignorant Phyſitian, nor needs

needs any perſon be troubled if they neglect the means; for God had determined they ſhould do ſo. Which indeed makes *Marthas* ſpeech to our Lord Chriſt to be ridiculous, *if thou hadſt been here my Brother had not died.*

That *Naaman* the *Syrian* ſhould waſh himſelf in the River of *Jordan* ſeven, times and then be clean of his Leproſie, was indeed miraculous: But yet it is plain, that if he had not done ſo, his Leproſie had remained.

Whether that cuſtom in the primitive Chriſtian Church of anointing the ſick with Oyl was miraculous, or not, I ſhall not diſpute; but this is certain, that it was then a mean uſed for the recovery of the Sick.

There is one objection which ſome men very impertinently urge againſt what I have been ſpeaking, and that is, *Aſa* his going to the Phy-

Phyſicians, which the Scripture ſeems to diſallow. To this I anſwer, that King *Aſa* is not therefore reprehended, becauſe he asked advice of the Phyſitians, but becauſe he truſted only in them, and *ſought not the Lord*: as it is very plain from 2 *Chron.* 16. 12. And ſure no reaſonable man will have any doubt but this was a very culpable neglect in *Aſa*.

Fourthly, Nothing is more evident than that there are ſeveral things which have a Phyſical efficacy in the ſhortning of Mens lives; as all kinds of exceſs, namely immoderate eating and drinking; all inordinate paſſions of mind, *&c.* as alſo the bad and unwholeſome conſtitution of a Kingdom. And on the other ſide, there are many things which effectually conduce to the lengthning of our days; namely all kind of moderation and temperance; the wholſomneſs of

the region wherein we live, and our good managery. What kind of perſons are thoſe who for ordinary live longeſt? are they not thoſe who carefully moderate their ſenſual appetites, and who govern their paſſions, and who live in the wholeſomeſt places? We commonly ſay that Men who live in a Populous City are ſhorter-lived than thoſe who live in the Country. I have already ſhewed how ſome vices in their proper tendency ſhorten Mens Lives, and that in ſome Nations and Kingdoms men live much longer than in others: all which methinks plainly tells us the Period of every Mans Life is not Fatal but Mutable, according as men are careful or negligent of themſelves.

I ſhall only add another condeſirable argument, and ſo draw this diſcourſe to a concluſion. And that is, don't we evidently perceive that many

many men had lived longer if they had notwretchedly, and unreasonably exposed themselves to danger; and is it not evident that many Millions who have died in battle would have had their days prolonged if they had never descended into battle? That God hath from the outgoings of Eternity by an absolute and inconditionate decree determined both the time and manner of every mans death, this is more than we can learn from Revelation; and methinks it is very inconsistent and irreconcilable with those many plain texts that shew it is lawful in time of eminent danger to flee for our safety, in time of Famine, and when any egregious contagion, such as the Pestilence, spreadeth in any place. How many Hundreds prolonged their lives by their flight from battle? If *David* and his Men had remained in *Keilah* it

is certain they ſhould have been delivered up into the hands of *Saul*; and what the Event ſhould have been we may eaſily conjecture, if God by a ſpecial providence had not interpoſed for their ſafety. But beſides the many inſtances we might produce, we have a poſitive precept to flee from any eminent danger, *Mat.* 10. 23. *When they perſecute you in this City flee into another.* Which plainly ſhews that this is a lawful means of prolonging our lives in ſuch caſes. It is a notable inſtance we have, *Jer.* 27. 18 *Thus ſaith the Lord, behold I ſet before you the way of life, and the way of death: he that abideth in this City ſhall dye by the Sword, and by the Famine, and by the Peſtilence: but he that goeth out and falleth to the Chaldeans that beſiege you, he ſhall live, and his life ſhall be unto him for a prey.* Which place plainly ſhews, that God had not

not decreed thePeriod of theirLives by any inconditionate decree; for the means both of prolonging and of cutting ſhort their Lives, are put in their choice. And this is all that I ſhall ſay to the *Third* thing I propoſed to ſpeak, concerning the mutability of the Period of every Mans Life for ordinary.

All that now remains is to conclude with ſome practical reflections upon what hath been ſaid. And *firſt*, whatever debates there may be concerning the Period of every Mans Life, yet there is no doubt but Mans Life hath a Period. *It is appointed for all men once to dye*, and from this warefare there is no diſcharge. Pray what is become of all thoſe who lived in former ages? have they not gone the way of all living? and ſhall we think to ſhun the approach of this laſt Enemy may not the multi-

plied experiences we have of other Mens frailty & mortality, convince us that we are brittle, and must return to the dust? we are of the like constitution that they were of, and we cannot expect to be otherwise dealt with. *What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?* and yet many men live as unconcerned as if they had the perpetuity of their beings ensured to them, and had *concluded an agreement with Death*, and had *secret intelligence with the Grave*.

It is truly a business worthy to be regrated that men who are living, as it were in the House of mourning, daily visited with pains and diseases, and have no promise, at least, for one moments security, yet live unconcerned and never mind those pleasures. It was indeed a praiseworthy and commendable custom amongst the *Jews*, to build their Sepulchers in their Gardens

dens (as we may gueſs from *Joh.* 19. 41.) that ſo in the midſt of their pleaſures, they might behold Monuments of their mortality.

Truly if we did frequently meditate upon our latter end, we ſhould live more like Chriſtians than we now do. The *end* hath hath a very great influence upon mens endeavours; hence is that general *Maxim*, *Finis ultimus præſcribit regulis totius vitæ.* And it ſeems that the Pſalmiſt upon this account prays, *Lord make me know mine end, and the meaſure of my dyys, that I may know how frail I am.* It is not to be doubted but we ſhould order our converſation aright, if we had this conſideration in our view. We ſhould have but low and contemptible thoughts of the periſhing pleaſures which we now ſo much delight in. Then we ſhould be argued out of

our folly in ſpending our years as a tale that is told.

It is threatned as a ſad Plague to the oppreſſour, *that the number of his years are hidden from him*, Job. 15. 20. He is a perſon that never conſiders that his appointed time approacheth, and that God will bring him into the Grave, the place appointed for all living: and it is laid down as the cauſe why *Jeruſalem came down wonderfully*, that *ſhe remembred not her laſt end.* Lam. 1. 9. And truly it may be alſo reckoned as the cauſe why Chriſtians live ſo contrary to the commendable rules of the Goſpel they profeſs. If we did but entertain ſomewhat more familiar thoughts of our appointed time, we could not but rectify thoſe abuſes we are guilty of. But alas, all the paſſages of our time are filled up with cares about things that periſh: we can walk

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to the Grave with our friends, whom we once loved as intirely as our own lives, and reap as little advantage by their death as if we had never been acquainted with them, never remembring, *that we muſt go to them but they cannot return to us.*

But *Secondly*, although the Period of every Mans Life is fixed in reſpect of the Divine foreknowledg, yet to us it is uncertain; we know not when this Enemy may ſurpriſe us. Of this we may ſay what our Lord Chriſt ſaith of the day of judgment, *but of that day and hour we know not.* When we leaſt ſuſpect its approach it may call us to go hence and be no more. How many millions of ſtrange and unexpected accidents attend us? *the Peſtilence walketh in darkneſs, and Deſtruction waſteth at noon-day*, aſtoniſhing diſpenſations may allarm us by night, and the de-

devouring Arrow fleeth by day, *Pſal.* 91. 5. 6. When we go abroad, we cannot promiſe to our ſelves a ſafe return, and at home when we put off our cloths, we cannot tell if we ſhall ever put them on again: the Grave is always ready for us. What ſtrange kind of unknown diſeaſes doth our age produce, from which we cannot promiſe to our ſelves any exemption? We live amongſt cruel and mad Men, and do we know but thoſe Beaſts of prey may devour us? When we look for peace, deſtruction may come. This was the Rich Mans Fate, who while he was promiſing himſelf reſt for many days, *that ſame night his Soul was required of him.* We are always apt to put the thoughts of this day far from us; when we enjoy health we never think of any change, and that ſickneſs may ſeir upon us and put a Period

riod to our lives. We live indeed at a great deal of uncertainty; *man alſo knoweth not his time, as the Fiſhes that are taken in an evil Net, and as the Birds that are caught in the ſnare: ſo are the ſons of men ſnared in an evil time, when it falleth ſuddenly upon them*, Eccl. 9. 12. We look upon Death as the unfaithful Servant did upon his Maſters coming, we think Death doth *delay its coming*; but if we were not fools we ſhould always realize the quickneſs of its approach. May be we are young and ſtrong, how many ſuch have been called away in the morning of their age? *Go too now* (ſaith the Apoſtle *James*) *ye that ſay to day or to morrow we will go into ſuch a City and continue there a year, and buy and ſell and get gain; whereas ye know not what ſhall be on the morrow*, Jam. 4. 13. 14. Alas

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our days at beſt are but labour and ſorrow, for they are ſoon cut off, and we flee away. When a few years are gone, we muſt go the way of all fleſh: and yet upon the happy improvment of this depends our everlaſting happineſs or miſery; *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledg, nor wiſdom, in the Grave whither we are going*, Eccl. 9. 10.

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